

spring 2018

wellness matters



Choices for healthy living • nutrition • fitness • well-being • health



Healthy Remedies that May Help in Allergy Season

Allergy season is here again. Airborne pollen is the most common cause of seasonal allergies, according to Montreal naturopath Frances Michaelson. She believes healthy gut bacteria is a huge factor when it comes to allergic reactions.

What are healthy bacteria? Also called “intestinal flora” or “probiotics,” the body has a balance of healthy bacteria in the gut that helps to digest the food you eat, absorb and manufacture nutrients. One of the most important functions of intestinal flora is to ensure a healthy immune system, which regulates your allergic responses, fight off disease and infection.

Michaelson suggests one of the major steps you can take to balance your gut health is to eat a healthy, balanced diet and reduce processed foods, which supply few nutrients and can make

a significant difference in your immune system and its response to disease, including allergies.

Numerous over-the-counter remedies for allergies merely provide temporary relief, says Michaelson, who adds that treating the symptoms won't address the root cause of the problem.

“Educate, not medicate,” she stresses. Michaelson prefers to address allergies by first looking at diet and lifestyle. She offers a few other tips to help alleviate allergies:

- Eat more dark, leafy greens. They all have immune-enhancing properties. And eat more plant food overall as their fibre contributes to a healthy intestinal flora.
- Foods that increase inflammation and poor gut health should be avoided. These include processed foods such as refined sugars and other highly refined carbohydrates.

10 FAST FACTS

- 1 The human body** has 650 muscles.
- 2 Globally, 23 per cent** of adults and 81 per cent school-aged adolescents are not active enough.
- 3 Researchers have found** that chewing mint-flavoured gum dramatically reduces feelings of tiredness.
- 4 Smelling a green apple** can relieve the stress associated with confined spaces, and may also prevent headaches and migraines.

5 Lemons contain more sugar than strawberries.

6 Canned white tuna has about three times more mercury than chunk light.

7 Eating vegetables along with fat can help the body better absorb nutrients.

8 Muscle does not weigh more than fat, but it is more dense than fat.

9 The quality of your workouts is more important than the quantity.

10 Listening to music while exercising can improve workout performance by 15 per cent.

Inside

- 3 Look beyond Dairy for Calcium Sources**
- 5 Four Exercises to Make up for Your Desk Job**
- 7 Recharge Your Mind with Sleep**



Spice up Spring with Cinnamon

More typically associated with the fall and winter months for its warm, aromatic flavour, cinnamon is a spice worth using all year 'round. In addition to giving a tasty boost to many foods and drinks, cinnamon has been associated with improved health and blood sugar control. Although further studies are needed to confirm the precise role of cinnamon in lowering blood pressure, improving heart health, working as an anti-inflammatory and digestive aid in the body, there appears to be a connection. Cinnamon is a natural source

of healthy antioxidant nutrients worth using if you're a fan of the flavour.

Cinnamon comes from the bark of a small evergreen tree. The bark is dried in the sun, where it curls up into the cinnamon "sticks" available in the spice aisle. The cinnamon for sprinkling is simply the ground version of these sticks. In cooler weather, a cinnamon-scented curry dish or warm cinnamon oatmeal cookies fresh from the oven can really hit the spot. Other great ways to enjoy cinnamon, even in the spring and summer months:

- Sprinkle it on cold oatmeal, mueslix or an overnight oats parfait with fruit and nuts.
- Sprinkle some on an afternoon latte, cup of tea or iced tea.
- Boil two or three cinnamon sticks in a cup of water for five minutes. Allow to cool, then combine this mixture with cold soda water and real fruit juice to make a summery punch.
- Make snack crêpes: Sprinkle crêpes with a little cinnamon and roll into a log.
- Try a sprinkle of cinnamon on grilled white fish or salmon served with a fruit salsa.
- Refrigerate bananas for a couple hours before eating: enjoy a cold banana with a sprinkle of cinnamon.
- Core an apple, slice into rings and serve with a sprinkle of cinnamon.
- Make homemade maple cinnamon-toasted almonds and enjoy straight up as a snack or mixed into a trailmix for an energy boost on summer hikes and outings.



Maple Cinnamon Toasted Almonds

Servings: 8

Calories/serving: 245

Ingredients

- 2 cups whole almonds
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 2 tsps canola oil
- 2 tsps vanilla
- 1 tbsp cinnamon

Instructions

- Roast the almonds on a large square baking sheet at 350°F (180°C) for 15 minutes.
- Take the almonds out of the oven. In a saucepan, mix together the maple syrup, canola oil, vanilla and cinnamon.
- Heat at medium just until the mixture starts to boil.
- Add the roasted almonds to the saucepan. Toss until the almonds are evenly glazed and covered with the syrup mixture.
- Cover the baking sheet with parchment paper. Spray with vegetable oil. Spread the maple almond mixture onto the parchment paper and let cool.

Enjoy the same day or store in an airtight container in the refrigerator to enjoy throughout the week.

Recipe created by Liz Pearson, RD, courtesy of the Almond Board of California

"Don't mistake activity with achievement."
— John Wooden, basketball player and coach

Diet May **Supercharge** Fat-Burning



Ever since researchers discovered that lean and younger individuals have a higher percentage of brown fat compared to white fat, the focus has been on how we can increase the brown fat levels.

Brown fat is commonly found in lesser amounts than white fat in adult humans. It burns energy and produces heat, while white fat acts predominantly as a storage site for energy (calories). This brown fat, also called adipose tissue, is found around organs that have high metabolic activity, such as the adrenal glands, liver and kidneys.

While some adults can have high amounts of brown fat, which may be related to genetics, people with a more lean body mass or a low body-mass index (BMI) tend to have more brown fat.

Health practitioners advise that the best solution is for people to manage their lifestyle habits by following a balanced diet and including daily activity to stimulate all your fat cells.

Some tips:

- **Avoid eating too much or too little:** Any extreme can inhibit brown fat activity. Carry healthy snacks for between meals for hunger pangs. Follow your body's signals for hunger; don't let the cravings or worries of your mind control your body.
- **Curb sugar cravings:** A diet high in sugar reduces brown fat activity. Try including more protein in meals and snacks, including nut butters, cheese and beans.
- **Drink green tea,** which has been shown to help activate the production of brown fat.



Look Beyond Dairy for Calcium Sources

Dairy products aren't the only source of dietary calcium. There are many other sources you may not be aware of, suggests Eve Lees, a Vancouver-based nutrition coach.

For example, poppy seeds provide much more calcium than other seeds: 126 mg in one tablespoon. Lees suggests adding them whole or ground to any dish; sprinkle on fresh fruit, mix into yogurt, cook them into your whole grains or add to soups and salads.

Poppy seeds are also rich in fibre, iron and many other nutrients. Alternate poppy

seeds with other seeds you are using, such as flax, sesame, chia, or hemp. Have a different one each day. They are all excellent choices, each with their own unique health-boosting properties.

Celery seed (not celery salt) is another little-known calcium contributor. One tablespoon offers 115 mg of calcium. Add to soups or cooked grains. Other overlooked calcium sources include six figs (115 mg), one cup cooked collard greens (350 mg), and one tablespoon blackstrap molasses (200 mg).



Molasses is left after refining sugarcane or sugar beets into sugar. Try mixing some into a glass of warm milk.

And did you know skim milk and skim-milk products provide more calcium than one-per-cent, two-per-cent and full-fat versions? That's because the calcium is all in the whey or watery part of the milk.

"It's never too late to be what you might have been."

— George Eliot, novelist and poet



Your Intro to Rock Climbing

Interested in indoor rock climbing but not sure where to begin? No prior experience is required, assures Kyle Wall, manager of the Hive Bouldering Gym in Vancouver. “Climbing is a very natural thing for humans to do, and with just a bit of practice, it’s likely you’ll be hooked.” Here are some tips to help you get you started:

- Take an introductory course at your local rock-climbing gym. Students will learn essential bouldering techniques and get instant feedback from an instructor. Having a good overall level of fitness will benefit your climbing but improving your technique “reigns king over all else,” says Wall.
- All you need to get started is a pair of climbing shoes. Climbing chalk is also helpful. Once you are ready to progress to indoor rock climbing with a rope, additional equipment is required. Wall recommends bringing your own harness, rope, and belay device.
- Wall recommends going no more than three to four times per week. This will help ensure you don’t overwork your tendons—a potential fast track to injury. If you’re hooked on climbing, it can be hard to take a break. But until you’ve been climbing for several years, make sure that you take a few days off every week.
- Wall also suggests practicing yoga to improve your strength and flexibility, both essential to climbing.

Benefits of indoor rock climbing go beyond the physical—the climbing community is also very strong. Wall encourages beginners to chat with other climbers at their gym, who can serve as mentors and help you push past physical or mental plateaus.

Take on **Endurance** with a **Team**

Looking for a new running challenge? Want to conquer a far distance but not alone? Relay races may be for you.

Taking the running world by storm, relay races can be found across North America, varying in distance from 42 kilometres to more than 300 km total. Teams of runners tackle the course together on road or trail as each runner generally runs from one to three legs during the relay.

Runners of all abilities are capable of conquering a relay, says Karin Femi Adande, a Vancouver-based B.C. Parks and Recreation-certified personal trainer and NCCP-trained sport coach. “Because of the additional support and motivation that comes with running not just for oneself but for a team,

a relay race can be a great first race or attempt at a new distance.”

However, it is important to talk with your health-care practitioner before you start training for a new sport. Runners also need adequate time to prepare and will benefit from race-specific training. For example, Femi Adande suggests doing training runs at night, running on the trails, and incorporating double-run days.

Need more reasons to try this new race type? Whether you miss being part of a team sport, want to spend more time with running friends, like running in new places or need a new challenge, get out there and sign up for a relay. A bonus? Femi Adande says relay races offer some of the best post-race celebrations out there.



“Do one thing every day that scares you.”
— Eleanor Roosevelt, former American first lady

Putting the **Spin** on Workouts

With more spin studios and classes

to try than ever before, it seems like everyone is cycling indoors—and for good reason.

“Spinning is a low-impact exercise that is open to anybody, regardless of fitness level or age,” says Kim Donnelly, head coach and owner of Toronto spin studio CYKL.

Spin-goers can control their bike’s resistance and difficulty of the workout, allowing newcomers to work within their own ability. But that doesn’t mean you won’t get a fantastic, cardio workout. According to Donnelly, participating in a group class with other like-minded people,



you are more likely to push yourself a little harder than if you were riding a stationary bike alone.

“Not only will your fitness improve, but this builds confidence and a sense of accomplishment.”

Ready to ride? Donnelly recommends beginner and experienced cyclists alike should do their homework when choosing a studio. Some classes use weights and coordinated moves, while others take a more traditional training approach. The type of bike may also differ.

The people and atmosphere are important too. “Look for a studio that has a community you feel like you could belong to,” says Donnelly. Most studios have a first-class discount. Donnelly encourages people to try several studios before committing to one.



4 Exercises to Make up for Your Desk Job

Spend most of your day sitting at a desk? You need these four exercises and stretches, recommended by Brandon Santo, a certified personal trainer and strength and conditioning specialist at Groundwork Athletics. Not only will these exercises promote better movement and posture, they’ll keep you more alert at work, reduce stiffness and help keep injury at bay:

1 Half-kneeling stretch: Take a half-kneel position, squeeze your back glute and pulse forward, eight times per side. This will stretch out your hip flexors and quads, which shorten and tighten from sitting at a desk.

2 Pectoral stretch: Put your forearm on a doorway, lean in, squeeze shoulder blades, and turn away from your arm, 45 to 60 seconds per side. Your shoulders and chest can round over when sitting. This stretch creates the opposite movement.

3 Horizontal pull/row: This strength exercise, which can be done with a resistance band or as a seated cable row at the gym, will strengthen your shoulders and back muscles. Santo recommends three sets of 10 reps at moderate to heavy intensity, three times per week.

4 Glute bridge: Lie on your back and with your knees bent and heels placed near your glutes. While pushing down on the floor, contract your glutes, and hold at the top of the position for two seconds. The glutes are the most important muscle that is used in daily activities like walking and standing from a seated position. Santo recommends three sets of 12 to 15 reps, three times per week.

While exercises are important, Santo says the best solution to sitting at a desk is to move. “The best position to be in is your next one.”

“The best revenge is massive success.”

— Frank Sinatra, singer

Working through the Grieving Process

Nobody gets a pass on grief or loss. It's something we will all experience in our lifetimes. Yet despite having heard the phrase "everyone grieves differently," we can feel judged and even guilty for not grieving the "right way," says registered clinical counsellor Jennifer Hollinshead, founder and clinical director of Peak Resilience in Vancouver.

"We give our clients 'permission' to have whatever reaction they may be having to grief. Permission can allow people to work through their actual emotions rather feeling trapped in judgment," she says.

What does giving yourself permission look like? "Try to not judge your emotions, thoughts and behaviours, just notice them with curiosity and compassion."

Another effective coping skill is to balance both feeling and avoiding difficult emotions. "Emotions associated with grief can often be overwhelming," says Hollinshead. "You don't have to feel your feelings all the time in order to heal," she says.

You can find this balance by allowing painful feelings to come up — through journaling, talking with friends, attending counselling — and then switching your focus to other things such as creating art, exercising or even working.



Don't go it alone. "Many people will instinctively want to isolate, but asking for help — whether it's with supportive loved ones or a mental-health professional — can really aid the healing process," says Hollinshead. "If reaching out feels too overwhelming at first, try reading stories from people who've also gone through grief. A great book is Sheryl Sandberg's *Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience and Finding Joy*."

Study Finds Different Levels of Brain Activity

A new study published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* has found significant differences between the brains of men and women that may be crucial in understanding gender-based risk for brain disorders, says psychiatrist and lead study author Daniel G. Amen.

Single photon emission computed tomography (SPECT) measures blood activity in the brain as well as images acquired from people both at rest and performing various cognitive tasks. It is the largest functional brain imaging study to date, and the results show different blood flow in specific areas of the brain.

The brains of women in the study were more active than men in many areas of the brain, particularly the prefrontal cortex, which is involved with focus and impulse

control, and in the limbic or emotional areas of the brain, which is associated with mood and anxiety. The visual and coordination regions of the brain were generally more active in men.



The study's findings of increased prefrontal cortex blood flow in women compared to that of men may explain why women generally display more empathy, intuition and self-control than men. The increased blood flow in the limbic areas (emotional) regions of the female brain may explain why women may be more vulnerable to anxiety, depression, insomnia and eating disorders.

Understanding these differences may be useful as brain disorders affect men and women differently. Women have significantly higher rates of Alzheimer's disease, depression (which is itself a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease) and anxiety disorders, while men have higher rates of ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and conduct-related problems.

It is hoped more precise knowledge of the physiological and structural gender differences in brain function will increase our understanding of mental health, and perhaps in understanding our relationships with our loved ones.

"The day you stop learning is the day you start decaying."
— Isaac Asimov, author



Recharge Your Mind with Sleep

The human mind is abuzz with thoughts all day, from experiencing a wide spectrum of emotions and the multitasking required in both work and family to the distraction from media and electronic devices.

“Our mind produces electrical and chemical activity in the brain,” says Catherine Roscoe Barr, BSc. in neuroscience, wellness coach and founder of The Life Delicious (thelifedelicious.ca).

“All cellular activity produces waste material, and the latest science reveals sleep’s role in ‘cleaning’ waste material from our brain. This housekeeping function is primarily active while we sleep and has significant implications for mood regulation, cognitive function, and neurodegenerative diseases.”

“Reducing both stress – mental, physical and nutritional – and light pollution can help you sleep better”

To recharge our mind and keep brain and body healthy, we must practice good sleep hygiene.

“Reducing both stress – mental, physical and nutritional – and light pollution

can help you sleep better,” says Roscoe Barr, and all it takes are a few simple tweaks to your daily routine and home environment.

The stress hormone cortisol gets a bad reputation, as it’s also important for motivation, focus and energy. It should, however, be at its lowest in the evening as it’s inversely proportional to the sleep hormone melatonin; cortisol must be low for melatonin to be high.

“Limiting stressful conversations, intense physical activity, and stimulating foods like caffeine, alcohol and sugar in the hours before bedtime will help reduce cortisol,” says Roscoe Barr, “while reducing light pollution – especially blue light emitted from fluorescent and LED lights and the screens of your mobile phone, computer and TV – will facilitate melatonin production to help you fall, and stay, asleep.”

Tips for Better Sleep Hygiene

To recharge your mind and allow your brain to do its nightly custodial work, practice this series of rituals as the sun sets:

- **Decrease cortisol levels by reducing mental stress:** be strict with office hours, save stressful conversations for earlier in the day, and spend time winding down (bathing, reading or journaling for example);
- **Decrease cortisol levels by reducing physical stress:** only engage in gentle physical activity;
- **Increase melatonin levels by reducing light pollution:** close blackout curtains in your bedroom, and put screens on night mode and turn them off at least one hour before bed.



“For every laugh there should be a tear.”
— Walt Disney, entrepreneur



Are We Wired for Laziness?

It turns out laziness may be a built-in trait left over from our prehistoric days of conserving energy for the next hunt.

Recent Simon Fraser University research found that even within a well rehearsed movement like walking, the nervous system

subconsciously monitors energy use and continuously re-optimizes movement patterns in a

constant effort to move as cheaply as possible.

"This is good news if you're an athlete," says lead researcher Max Donelan. Moving as cheaply as possible reserves energy to help you excel in your sport or activity. However, for those wanting to burn more calories while exercising, it's not great news, he says.

The researchers tested theories of how we learn to



move. When leg braces added resistance to the knee joint, they noticed the participants changed fundamental characteristics of their gait while walking, just to gain a few percentage points' savings in energetic cost.

Donelan says our subconscious ability to continuously optimize and adjust our movements benefits us in keeping physical efforts

energetically optimal.

"It helps backpackers efficiently adapt to changing terrains, it helps patients compensate for movement deficits after injury or disease and, for better or worse, it helps all of us move with as little energy as possible."

However, moving in the most economical way possible is bad news for those trying to lose weight. The study confirms it is indeed a myth that exercise is more effective for weight loss than dieting; cutting calories remains the important factor.



Wellness Matters is published quarterly by Canada Wide Media Limited. A French version (*pause santé*) is also available. Correspondence may be addressed to: CANADA WIDE MEDIA LIMITED, 230, 4321 Still Creek Drive, Burnaby, B.C., V5C 6S7. fax: 604.299.9188 website: www.wellness-matters.ca email: info@wellness-matters.ca

For **sales and subscriptions** please contact Andrea Burgers at 604.473.0305 or aburgers@canadawide.com.

For **administration inquiries** please contact Tracy McRitchie at 604.473.0388 or tmcritchie@canadawide.com.

Editor: Lynn Mitges

Art Director: Bernhard Holzmann

Publisher: Brad Liski

Contributing Writers: Eve Lees, Danielle Leroux, Catherine Roscoe Barr

Advisory Board: Patricia Chuey, R.D., Chris Cunningham, M.D., Lori Yarrow, D.C., P.M.P.

© Canada Wide Media Limited. 2018 All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced in any form without prior written consent from the publisher.

Information in this newsletter is intended as a general guide in health and wellness and not intended to be medical advice. Readers are advised to consult with their physician for specific medical concerns.

