

spring 2019

wellness matters



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



The Season of Sun Sensitivity

As spring sunshine heads our way, it can be a challenge for those people who have reactions to sunlight.

Allergic reactions (or sensitivities) to sunlight occur when ultraviolet (UV) radiation triggers changes in the body's skin cells. The immune system mistakenly identifies proteins in the cells as harmful invaders, and then releases antibodies to attack those cells. This results in symptoms that include hives, blisters, or an itchy red rash.

A common type of sun allergy is called polymorphic light eruption (PMLE). Symptoms usually appear within hours or days after exposure to sunlight and include itchiness, the formation of tiny white or yellow bumps on a red background, or skin that can get increasingly red and swollen after exposure.

Actinic prurigo is characterized by chapped, split lips and conjunctivitis (an inflammation of the inside of the eyelid) as well as raised patches of

red skin and itchy bumps that show up within days of sun exposure.

Chronic actinic dermatitis can cause thick patches of dry, itchy and inflamed skin, with other patches of skin that don't seem to be affected at all.

Certain medications (such as tetracycline antibiotics), chemicals (including fragrances), and medical disorders (like dermatitis) can cause photosensitivity, making the skin more sensitive to the sun's effects.

Often reducing sun exposure, without any treatment, will help resolve the condition. Treatment can include corticosteroid creams, oral antihistamines and, for severe cases, oral corticosteroids or oral immunosuppressant medications.

People with sun sensitivity should always wear a minimum SPF 30 sunscreen as well as sunglasses, a long-sleeved shirt and wide-brimmed hat.

10 FAST FACTS

- 1 Steaming or microwaving** vegetables rather than boiling them minimizes the loss of water-soluble vitamins.
- 2 The liver performs** more than 500 different functions, such as fighting off infections, neutralizing toxins and manufacturing proteins and hormones.
- 3 Dark chocolate** may help to lower bad cholesterol (LDL) and increase good cholesterol (HDL).
- 4 Serving size** is not necessarily the suggested quantity of food you should eat. The serving size tells you the quantity of food used to calculate the numbers in the nutrition facts table.
- 5 Eating foods** that contain trans fats increases the risk of heart disease. Last year Health Canada banned the use of partially hydrogenated oils in foods, the main source of industrially produced trans fat.
- 6 Consuming just one can** of sugary soda per day increases the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes by 22 percent.
- 7 Children need** a total of 500 mL (2 cups) of milk every day to help meet their requirement for vitamin D.
- 8 Most frozen breaded chicken** products, such as chicken nuggets, strips, burgers, chicken fries and popcorn chicken, contain raw chicken. They may look pre-cooked or browned but they are raw inside.
- 9 Frozen breaded chicken** products should be cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F.
- 10 Laughing can increase** blood flow by 20 percent.

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Think Green



Although herbs are abundant year-round, local varieties are widely available in the spring. Freshly chopped herbs add delicious flavour and nutrients to meals while hardly making a caloric contribution at all given the small quantity used. For example, a tablespoon of minced, fresh parsley supplies about two calories. Fresh herbs, like many vegetables, contain potassium and other minerals while adding tremendous salt-free flavour.

Incorporate fresh herbs with the ideas presented here. To keep any unused herbs fresh, set them in a glass of water as you would flowers in a vase and store in the fridge for up to one week.

Parsley: Not just for a breath-freshening, use it as a garnish on the side of the plate, and a bundle of fresh, chopped parsley is a perfect addition to grainy salads made with quinoa, rice or couscous, such as a tabbouleh salad. Chopped parsley also

makes a bright and tasty garnish to spring potato and egg dishes.

Mint: Chopped mint looks pretty as a garnish on a fruit platter and is also a healthy, flavourful addition to a glass of a sugar-free, carbonated beverage. Try a virgin mojito made with club soda, freshly squeezed lime juice and a little muddled fresh mint.

Basil: A classic finish to any tomato-based dish from lasagna to a tomato and bocconcini platter. Fresh basil is also perfect in Thai-style vegetable dishes.

Cilantro: Adds flavour to everything Mexican from tacos to guacamole. Make an extra-fresh cut salsa by simply chopping tomatoes, bell peppers, a little red onion, one clove of garlic, the juice of one lime and lots of chopped cilantro.

Dill: Adds gorgeous flavour to any spring salmon meal but also pairs well with eggs, new baby potatoes, mild cheeses and vegetable dips.

spring recipe



Spring Green Veggie Fritters

Serves: 6, 2 each

These multitasking fritters can be served as a vegetable side dish, a light breakfast, or made smaller and served as an appetizer.

Ingredients

- 2 eggs
- 6 green onions, minced
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) salt
- ¼ tsp (1.25 mL) freshly ground black pepper
- ¾ cup (180 mL) grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup (125 mL) all-purpose flour
- 3 cups of grated or finely chopped green vegetables (try asparagus, spinach, zucchini and/or various spring herbs)
- ⅓ cup (80 mL) canola oil

Instructions

- In a large bowl, whisk eggs. Add salt, pepper, cheese and flour. Stir to combine.
- Mix in the chopped vegetables.
- Heat about ¼ cup (60 mL) of the canola oil in a non-stick pan over medium heat.
- Measure about ¼ cup (60 mL) of the fritter batter into the pan and press down to flatten. Cook for 3-4 minutes or until bottom is golden in colour. Flip and cook for an additional 3 minutes. Add more oil to the pan as needed to panfry the remaining fritters. Remove from pan to a cooling rack or paper-towel-lined plate.

“He was a bold man that first ate an oyster.”
Jonathan Swift, satirist and poet



Nuts for Nutrition

While nuts are high in calories and fat, they're also an excellent source of plant protein, as well as fibre, plant sterols and antioxidant vitamins such as vitamin E and selenium. Nuts contain fat, but it's almost all heart-healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat and omega-3 essential fatty

acids, which lower LDL (bad) cholesterol.

Try substituting nuts for one serving of meat or egg protein. Sprinkle chopped nuts on yogurt, cereal or salad, add them to a stir-fry, or use them instead of breadcrumbs on fresh fish. Substitute nut butter for deli meat on a

sandwich, or add it to sauces or smoothies. At work, nuts make for a healthy and satisfying mid-morning or afternoon snack. Almonds are especially rich in calcium, peanuts are the best source of protein and walnuts are high in omega-3 fatty acids. Limit your intake of nuts to ¼ cup or 60 mL a day.

Bone-Density Boost

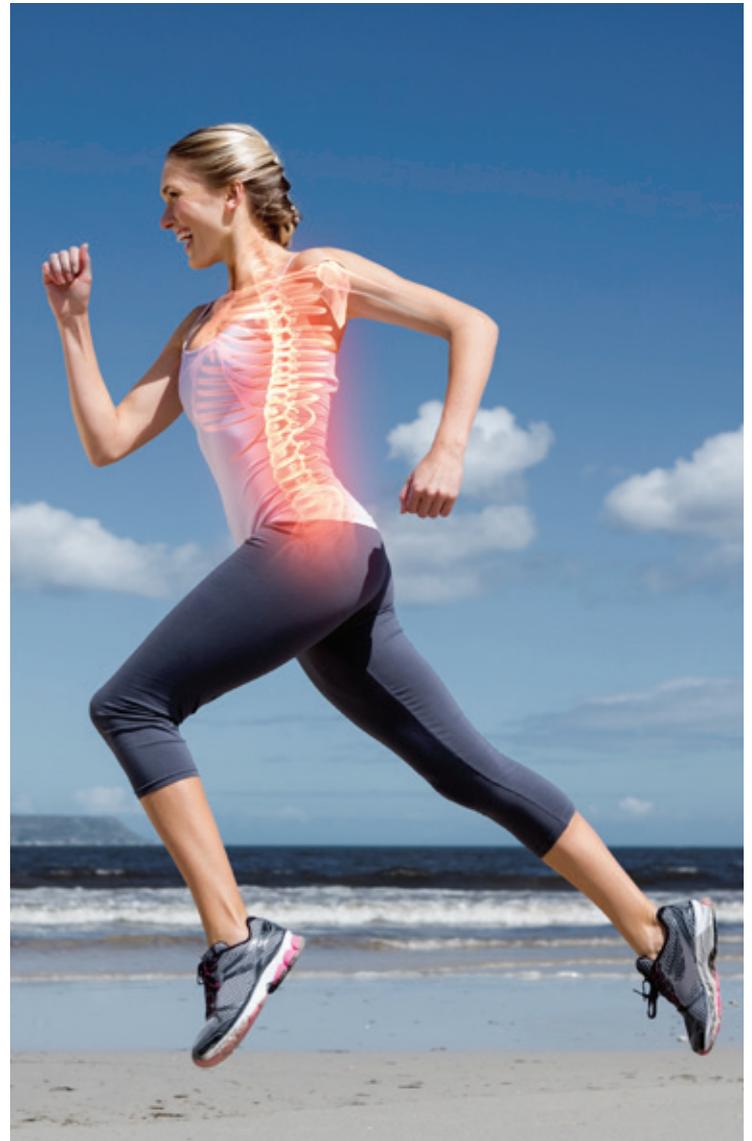
Researchers have recently discovered that nutrition plays a greater role in bone density and strength than exercise.

In a University of Michigan study on mice, researchers examined mineral supplementation and exercise and discovered that nutrition played a greater role in maintaining bone density even when the mice no longer exercised.

The study results can benefit humans, who may find diet much easier to maintain compared to exercise as they get older. The study's author said consumers should not head out to buy supplements as the findings don't translate directly from mice to humans, but instead provide a starting point for researchers. But exercise, along with a good diet, still is important and beneficial for healthy bones.

Calcium facts:

- Calcium, the mineral building block for strong bones and teeth, is found in dairy products, dark green leafy vegetables, fish and calcium-fortified foods. However, few of us probably get the recommended daily allowance for this mineral through diet alone. To make up the deficit, many people turn to calcium supplements.
- When taken as a supplement, calcium is best absorbed when taken in doses of 500 mg or less. The body needs vitamin D to help absorb the calcium.
- Avoid taking calcium supplements at the same time as tetracycline, iron supplements, thyroid hormones or corticosteroids because the calcium may interfere with the effectiveness of the drugs. Consult your doctor before taking calcium supplements.



"The bravest people are the ones that don't mind looking like cowards."

T.H. White, author

Athletes Not Immune to Cardiovascular Disease

New research from the University of British Columbia suggests that even particularly fit athletes are not immune to cardiovascular disease. And the research also discovered that these people—if they do have cardiovascular disease—often don't have any symptoms.

The study, which was published in *BMJ Open Sport and Exercise Medicine*, reveals how important it is for middle-aged athletes to be checked for cardiovascular risk factors, particularly if they suffer high blood pressure or high cholesterol, or if they have a family history of cardiovascular disease.

Cardiovascular disease includes conditions that involve narrowed or blocked blood vessels, which can lead to a heart attack, chest pain or stroke.

One of the study's authors, PhD student Barbara Morrison, said risk factors must always be taken into account.

The study followed almost 800 athletes from age 35 and older who engaged in moderate to vigorous physical activity three days a week. All participants went through screening questions and medical checks, as well as an exercise stress test.

Of the participants, 11 percent had significant cardiovascular



disease—and 10 of the participants had severe coronary artery disease without any symptoms.

Researchers said the study is a reminder for everyone to undergo regular medical checkups, especially if there is a family history of heart attack or stroke.

Exercise at the Cellular Level

A few minutes of high-intensity interval or sprinting exercise could offer cellular benefits at similar levels as those derived from exercising for much longer durations.

Mitochondria—the energy centres of the cells—are essential for good health. Previous research has found that exercise creates new—and improves the function of existing—mitochondria. A research study published in the *American Journal of Physiology – Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology* and reported in *Science*



Daily.com involved eight adults who were monitored as they performed cycling workouts at both moderate and high-intensity levels.

Researchers found cell-response changes in different parts of the mitochondria after exercise and, in fact, a few minutes of high-intensity performance showed results similar to that of longer and more moderate-level intensity.

Researchers say the results can help to understand how exercise can affect metabolic health.

“Laughter is sunshine. It chases winter from the human face.”

Victor Hugo, poet

Video-game Exercises Can Help

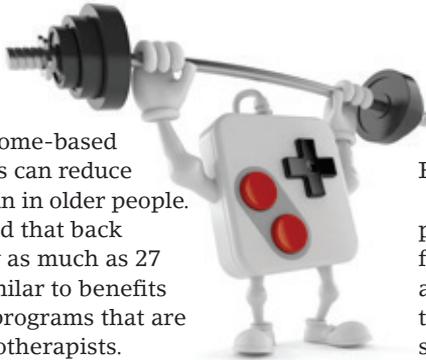
New research from

the University of Sydney shows that home-based video-game exercises can reduce chronic low-back pain in older people.

Researchers found that back pain was reduced by as much as 27 percent, which is similar to benefits that are realized in programs that are supervised by physiotherapists.

Published in *Physical Therapy* journal and reported by ScienceDaily.com, this groundbreaking study looked at the effectiveness of home-based video games to combat low-back pain (LBP), which is a disabling and costly musculoskeletal condition that typically affects older people and can worsen with age.

“Our study found that home-based video game exercises are a valuable treatment option for older people suffering from chronic low back pain as participants experienced a 27 percent reduction in pain and a 23 percent increase in function from the exercises,” said Dr. Joshua Zadro, a phys-



iotherapist and postdoctoral research fellow from the University of Sydney School of Public Health.

Zadro explained that participants engaged in exercises for flexibility, strengthening and aerobics for 60 minutes three times per week at home without supervision for eight weeks. The

results were comparable to those that would have been completed with supervision from a physiotherapist.

Structured exercise programs are recommended for the management of chronic LBP, but there is poor compliance to unsupervised home exercises, said Zadro. But the study had high compliance to video-game exercises, with participants completing on average 85 percent of recommended sessions.

The global population of people over 60 years old is expected to triple by 2050 and Zadro said this study shows the need for such research to continue.



No Quick Fix to Cut Belly Fat

Most people have likely seen Internet ads that claim that consumers can cut belly fat by avoiding specific foods. And while reducing overall fat can lower health risks, there is no diet to specifically target the fat around the belly.

In an article in the American College of Sports Medicine *Health and Fitness Journal*, Kari D. Pilolla of California State University in San Luis Obispo says there is not a single miracle cure-all to target abdominal fat.

With obesity on the rise in North America, there is an increasing focus on the health risks. Obesity has been generally defined as a waist circumference of about 34 inches in women and 40 inches in men. Measuring waist circumference is a common method to assess abdominal fat. Risk of abdominal obesity increases with age, especially in women, and with changes in hormone levels. Larger waist size is an indicator for increased risks associated with excess fat stored around the abdomen.

A heart-healthy diet that is high in fibre and low in saturated fats is one step toward reducing—and preventing—obesity. And of course, cardiovascular, fat-burning exercise plays a critical role in belly-fat management.



“Don’t eat anything your grandmother wouldn’t recognize as food.”

Michael Pollan, writer

It may be tough for working moms to get a good night's sleep, but working inflexible shifts may affect their children's sleep, too.

After studying the sleep habits of children from ages five to nine, researchers found that when mothers reported less flexibility in their work schedules, their children got less sleep. When they gained flexibility, their children slept more.

However, this link diminished when the researchers accounted for whether the children were given regular bedtime routines, suggesting consistent bedtimes may be the key to offsetting damage done by restrictive work schedules.

Orfeu Buxton, professor of bio-behavioural health at Penn State, said the results give clues into how and why a parent's work schedule may affect their children's sleep.

"We've seen this link between inflexible work schedules and children's sleep patterns before, but we didn't know why it

was happening," Buxton said. "Our results suggest that maybe it's about children not having a regular bedtime routine if their mother is working an inflexible job. We know positive routines especially are very important for positive child growth, so sleep may suffer if it's not there."

The researchers said the findings—recently published in the *Journal of Child and Family Studies*—also suggest that it could be helpful for employers to create policies that give employees more flexibility, for the health of both the employees and their children.



Shifts Affect Sleep

Cardio Is Crucial

Researchers are studying what many have espoused for a long time: better cardiorespiratory health may help longevity.

Researchers studied 122,007 patients who underwent exercise treadmill testing at Cleveland Clinic between Jan. 1, 1991, and Dec. 31, 2014, to measure all-cause mortality relating to the benefits of exercise and fitness. The paper was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association Network Open* and reported that increased cardiorespiratory fitness was directly associated with reduced long-term mortality, with no limit on the positive effects of aerobic fitness.

The study's authors reported that aerobic fitness is associated with the greatest benefits, particularly for patients aged 70 and older and who suffer hypertension.

Dr. Wael Jaber, a Cleveland Clinic cardiologist and senior author of the study, said that everyone should be encouraged to achieve and maintain high fitness levels.



The study's findings emphasize the long-term benefits of exercise and fitness—even to extreme levels—regardless of age or coexistent cardiovascular disease.

"If we all did the things we are capable of, we would astound ourselves."

Thomas Edison, inventor

Influencing the Offspring

A study undertaken by Kristin Stanford, a physiology and cell biology researcher with Ohio State University College of Medicine at the Wexner Medical Center, shows that paternal exercise has quite an impact on the metabolic health of offspring well into their adulthood.

Laurie Goodyear of the Joslin Diabetes Center and Harvard Medical School co-led the study, published in the journal *Diabetes*.

Recent studies have linked development of Type 2 diabetes and poor metabolic health to the parents' substandard diet. There is additional information that shows that fathers play an important role for their offspring, particularly in obesity and metabolic programming.

Stanford's research team investigated how a father's exercise regimen would affect his offspring's metabolic health.

Using a mouse model, they fed male mice either a normal diet or a high-fat diet



for three weeks. Some mice from each diet group were sedentary and some exercised freely. It turned out that the offspring from sires that exercised had improved glucose metabolism, decreased

body weight and a decreased fat mass.

Researchers also explained that when the dad exercised—even while on a high-fat diet—they saw improved metabolic health in their adult offspring.



Problems with Nail Polish

Consumer awareness of the potential health effects of nail polish have caused manufacturers to start removing potentially toxic ingredients and labelling their products as being free of those substances.

But according to a report in *Environmental Science & Technology*, the labels aren't always accurate and reformulated products aren't necessarily safer.

Back in the 2000s, concerns were raised about the use of plasticizers, which work to improve flexibility and chip resistance in nail polish. Manufacturers started switching to other compounds and would label polishes as 3-Free—what commonly refers to the toxic trio of di-n-butyl phthalate (DnBP), toluene and formaldehyde.

Manufacturers soon advertised that as many as 13 different chemicals were no longer used, although there's scant standardization

about which chemicals are excluded. Reports now suggest that substitute ingredients, such as the plasticizer triphenyl phosphate (TPHP), also may be harmful.

The concern is that one toxic chemical is being replaced by others. The report cites the examination of 40 different nail polishes and found that manufacturers have generally removed DnBP and are reducing the amount of TPHP. Yet some producers are using similar toxic substitutes without disclosing the compounds. The researchers also found that polishes with labels that promote fewer ingredients don't necessarily have a reduced toxicity. The study highlights the need for standardization on such products.



“The secret to staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly and lie about your age.”

Lucille Ball, comedian

On-Again, Off-Again Relationships Not So Hot



On-again, off-again relationships can take a toll on mental well-being, according to a researcher from the University of Missouri.

Kale Monk, assistant professor of human development and family science, along with co-authors Brian Ogolsky and Ramona Oswald from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, collected data from more than 500 people in relationships and found an increase in breaking up then reuniting was linked to an increase in psychological distress, including symptoms such as depression and anxiety.



The study shows that although some couples remain together due to practicality or necessity, it may be dedication—not obligation—that factors into the decision.

“Breaking up and getting back together is not always a bad omen for a couple,” said Monk. “In fact, for some couples, breaking up can help partners realize the importance of their relationship, contributing to a healthier, more committed

unions. On the other hand, partners who are routinely breaking up and getting back together could be negatively impacted by the pattern.”

Previous research suggests that more than 60 percent of adults have been involved in such relationships, and about one-third of couples living together also reported breaking up and reconciling. When compared to relationships without this behaviour, on-off relationships are linked to increased rates of abuse, poorer communication and decreased levels of commitment.

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