

wellness matters



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



The Common Cold: When to **STAY AWAY**



When your cold symptoms are severe, stay at home! But what if you absolutely must go into the office?

According to the Health Information section of *Canada.com*, a few sniffles and a dry, infrequent cough mean that you are contagious, but if you absolutely have to go out, practicing proper hygiene will prevent you from passing it onto others.

However, Rebecca Gilman, of the Public Health Agency of Canada, advises even if you are mildly ill, stay home until symptoms subside.

To minimize spreading or catching the cold virus at work, follow these Public Health Agency

of Canada hygiene tips:

- Wash your hands often or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after touching your nose or mouth.
- Wipe down shared property right after handling; the coffee-pot handle, mouse, keyboard, copy machine, telephone, doorknobs, light switches, even elevator buttons.
- Always wipe your nose, sneeze, or cough into disposable tissue and dispose of it immediately.

Gilman stresses not to risk infecting co-workers: "Stay home, because if you have the cold virus it spreads very easily to others."

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.

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Portable Fuel

Packing a lunch for school or work doesn't have to be a task to loathe. With delicious and good-for-you foods as the goal, think of the midday meal as critical fuel for the busiest parts of your day. Taking a power lunch and a couple of quality snacks along means you'll save a significant amount of money. You can also avoid the crowds at the food court, cafeteria or food truck, saving time and maybe even getting out of the office a little sooner at the end of the day.

Because the most energizing snacks combine both protein and carbohydrate, ideal snacks include yogurt, trail mix, fresh fruit combined with nuts, or vegetables with a protein-based dip. If choosing an energy bar, opt for one containing at least a little bit of protein, while being low in added sugar. Create your own snack mix using a variety of super-nutritious

hemp hearts, chia seeds, pumpkin seeds, walnuts, pecans, pistachios and almonds.

Emphasize in-season produce. Apples are amazing in the fall, but you can also grate vegetables like fresh beets, carrots or turnips on top of salads or layer them into whole-wheat sandwiches to add crunch. If making hearty soups or dinners inspired by autumn's root vegetables, purposely make extra as "plan-overs" to incorporate into a packed lunch the next day.

Hard-boiled eggs are a very portable protein option that are a complete meal with the addition of seedy whole-grain crackers and a selection of raw veggies with hummus. The corn, beet and edamame salad recipe is a perfect vegetarian lunch option; accompany it with a few grilled prawns or chicken chunks for a protein-rich version. It can also be made vegan with soy cheese and the addition of tofu cubes.

fall recipe

Zesty Eggplant Frittata

Serves: 6

Ingredients

- 1 medium eggplant, cubed
- 2 cups cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
- ½ cup pitted olives, halved
- 1 small onion, coarsely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp red wine vinegar
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp hot pepper flakes
- ⅓ tsp pepper
- 8 eggs
- ⅓ cup chopped fresh parsley
- ¼ cup water

Instructions

- Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Combine eggplant, tomatoes, olives, onion, garlic, oil, vinegar, oregano, hot pepper flakes and pepper in large bowl; toss gently to combine. Spoon mixture onto large baking sheet; spread evenly.
- Roast in preheated 425°F oven, stirring halfway through cooking time, until vegetables are tender and lightly browned, 25 to 30 minutes. Remove from oven. Leave oven on.
- Whisk eggs, parsley and water. Lightly spray a 10- to 12-inch non-stick ovenproof skillet with cooking spray. Heat skillet over medium. Pour egg mixture into skillet. As eggs set around edge of skillet, with spatula, gently lift cooked portions to allow uncooked egg to flow underneath. Cook until bottom is set and surface is still somewhat liquid, 6 to 7 minutes.
- Remove skillet from heat; spoon eggplant and tomato mixture over top of frittata. Return to oven and bake until egg mixture is set, about 10 minutes.

"Life expectancy would grow by leaps and bounds if green vegetables smelled as good as bacon."

Doug Larson, columnist

The Turkey Coma

That lethargic state after a big holiday meal isn't from the turkey, says Andrea Hardy, RD of Ignite Nutrition Inc. in Calgary. It's more likely from overindulging the many tempting food and drink choices we're offered.

It takes lots of energy to digest a huge meal, explains Hardy. Blood flow increases in the gastrointestinal tract to aid digestion and less blood flows to your brain, leaving you feeling lethargic.

Hardy says many believe the amino acid tryptophan in turkey causes the fatigue. Tryptophan can be converted into serotonin, a natural relaxant. However, you'd have to consume tryptophan on an empty stomach, with no other protein source (which limits tryptophan absorption), and in greater



amounts than provided in a holiday feast.

To avoid food coma from a huge meal, Hardy suggests eating mindfully. "Slowing

down and truly tasting the meal leads to greater satisfaction with less food, which helps avoid overeating."

Be Mindful of How You Eat

In a world with endless access to sweet, savoury, salty, crunchy, creamy, warm, cold or any food desired at any time day or night, a critical strategy for navigating the sea of choices without weight gain or ill health is mindful eating.

Brian Wansink, author of *Slim by Design* and *Mindless Eating*, encourages paying attention to not only what we eat, but how, why and when. Since we need to eat every four hours or so during the day, we shouldn't approach a meal or snack like it's the last one ever. At mindlesseating.org, Wansink states that "most of us don't overeat because we're hungry.

We overeat because of family and friends, packages and plates, names and numbers, labels and lights, colours and candles, shapes and smells, distractions and distances, cupboards and containers."

"People don't realize that they make more than 200 food-related decisions each day, but only put thought into about 10 per cent," says Michele Blanchet, dietitian at Vancouver General Hospital's Cardiovascular Health Centre. "Little changes can make a big difference. A hundred calories every day for one year is 10 pounds." Blanchet suggests pre-portioning foods you want to eat less of, using smaller plates and never eating directly from the package.



Mindful Eating Tips

- Avoid distractions and multitasking while eating. Sit down and focus on eating.
- **Slow down**, chew thoroughly and notice every mouthful of food.
- **Use larger plates** for foods you are trying to eat more of, like vegetables.
- **Keep on hand a large variety** of foods you should eat and reduce the availability of less healthy options.



- **Think of a ranking** of 1 to 10 where 1 is very hungry and 10 is too full. Work on stopping eating when you're satisfied, but not stuffed: around an 8 or 9.
- **To reduce having food** on your mind nonstop, choose quality food while avoiding micromanaging or overthinking every morsel eaten.
- Consider **wholesome** eating as the fuel for all you want to do in life.

"One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating."

Luciano Pavarotti, opera singer



Running from the Cold

Keen runners still find ways to get out there and pound the pavement in any weather. While running is an excellent form of cardiovascular exercise, it's important to stay safe when the temperatures drop and days are shorter.

For instance, people tend to skip a proper warm-up and a post-activity stretch, but these are particularly important in cold weather because they reduce the risk of injury. The warm-up gradually brings the heart rate up, while the stretch afterward helps improve flexibility.

Runners need to be well hydrated when the thermometer dips. "People can be fooled into thinking they don't need as much water, but you're still using up your fluids and need to rehydrate," Jean-Sebastien Hartell, an athletic therapist at Volleyball Canada, tells *Wellness Matters*.

Wearing proper clothing is a must, says Lynn Kanuka, the RunWalk Coach at SportMedBC. She recommends a lightweight technical fabric next to the skin and layers on top. She never runs without a hat.

In the dark days of autumn, it's vital to be visible. Most running gear comes with built-in reflective material, but you can avoid buying pricey gear. "Go to a dollar store and get blinking lights, or get reflective tape at the local hardware store and put it on your sleeves," Kanuka advises.

And be careful not to overdo it, especially if you're running quickly just to stay warm. "People do too much too fast too soon," Kanuka says. "Then they get hurt."



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.

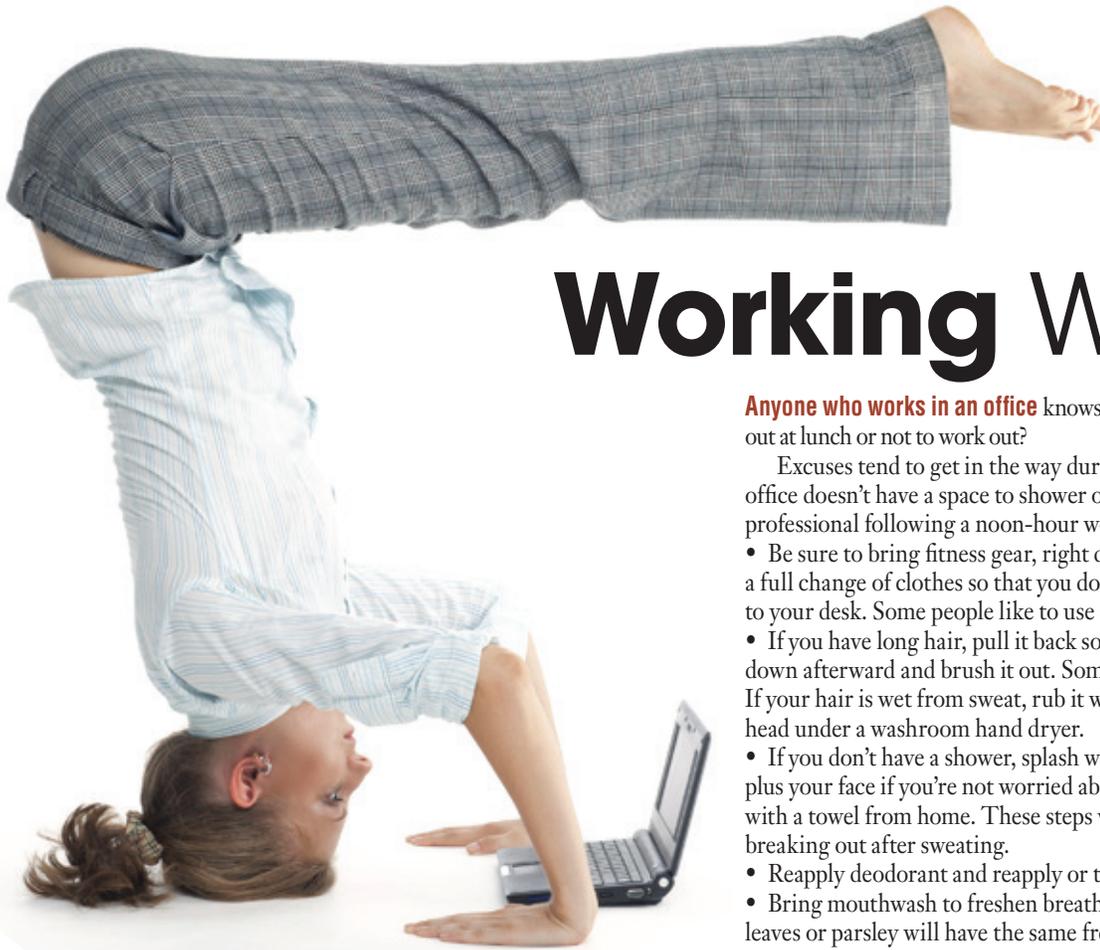
3 Horizontal pull/row: This strength exercise, which can be done with a resistance band or as a seated cable row at the gym, will strengthen your shoulders and back muscles. Santo recommends three sets of 10 reps at moderate to heavy intensity, three times per week.

4 Glute bridge: Lie on your back 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."

"A fit, healthy body – that is the best fashion statement."

Jess C. Scott, author/artist.

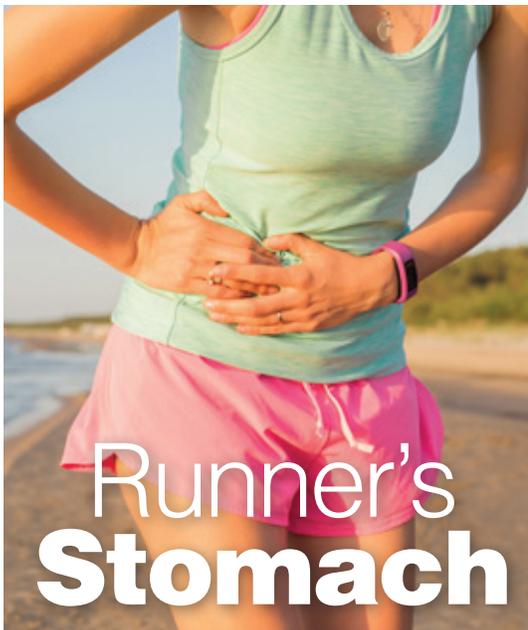


Working Workout

Anyone who works in an office knows the dilemma only too well: to work out at lunch or not to work out?

Excuses tend to get in the way during the work week, especially if your office doesn't have a space to shower or change. Use these tips to still look professional following a noon-hour workout.

- Be sure to bring fitness gear, right down to a sports bra and socks. Have a full change of clothes so that you don't bring a bad aroma with you back to your desk. Some people like to use deodorizer in their shoes.
- If you have long hair, pull it back so it doesn't get sweaty. Put it back down afterward and brush it out. Some people like to use dry shampoo. If your hair is wet from sweat, rub it with a towel, blow dry, or hold your head under a washroom hand dryer.
- If you don't have a shower, splash water on your neck, chest and armpits plus your face if you're not worried about makeup. Dry off completely with a towel from home. These steps will also help protect your skin from breaking out after sweating.
- Reapply deodorant and reapply or touch up makeup.
- Bring mouthwash to freshen breath. Alternatively, chew gum; mint leaves or parsley will have the same freshening effect.



Runner's Stomach

If you've ever had that gut-wrenching ache, followed by a desperate need to go to the bathroom during or after a run, you're not alone.

A study by the National Center for Biotechnology Information found that 30 to 90 per cent of distance runners have experienced runner's stomach, the term given to intestinal problems suffered by some runners.

"Most runners have experienced this, whether it's in the form of vomiting, nausea or diarrhea," says Katherine Smyth, Squamish, B.C.-based licensed acupuncturist at Reach Physio & Massage and personal trainer to some of the top athletes and coaches in Canada.

The solution, Smyth tells *Wellness Matters*, is simple. "It often comes down to diet, when you've eaten, how much is sitting in your intestines, how strong your digestive system is and, more often than not, dehydration."

So what can you do to avoid runner's stomach? Here are Smyth's top tips:

- Avoid cold foods and drinks first thing in the morning or before a run. They make the stomach contract, preventing digestion, which only occurs when the stomach is warm.
- Before your run, avoid anything too high in fat or fibre. Instead opt for high-protein, nutrient-dense food like yams, eggs or oatmeal.
- Bring ginger chews on your run. Ginger root has been shown to help reduce nausea and vomiting.
- Make sure you are hydrated, pre- and post-workout.
- Practise new nutrition strategies. Everyone is different, so remember what works for one person won't necessarily work for another.

"Fantasy is an exercise bicycle for the mind. It might not take you anywhere, but it tones up the muscles that can."

Terry Pratchett, author



The Effects of Childhood **Bullying** on Adults

According to a 2015 Angus Reid poll, 75 per cent of Canadians are bullied at school. Unfortunately, these experiences don't just affect us when we're young.

Donna Marshall, a leading expert on workplace bullying and harassment, and CEO of BizLife Solutions in Toronto, says childhood bullying — whether at home or school — can also bleed into adult lives and relationships.

"It has a very profound psychological and emotional impact on people," says Marshall, who explains that bullying often causes victims to dissociate from and normalize past trauma, feel victimized and powerless, or become a bully themselves.

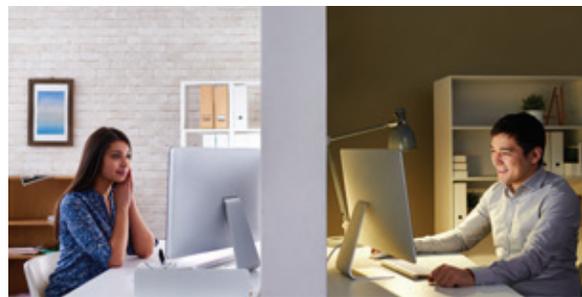
In adulthood, this may materialize in myriad ways. Victims of childhood bullying may choose partners who are bullies, try to change a "bad" partner by being nicer to them, demonstrate symptoms of PTSD or disrespect others.

Because childhood traumas alter the way we think, Marshall recommends counselling as the most effective way to help us process the painful bullying experiences of our past and change our current behaviours in relationships. She also suggests reaching out to a support group through your family doctor or local hospital, or using other doctor-approved resources.

Toll Ahead: Long-distance Relationships and Mental Health

With a lack of physical contact and dependency on technology to keep in touch, couples in long-distance relationships face additional woes to those who are geographically close.

Whether you reside at a distance by choice or because life circumstances have forced you to, long-distance relationships can affect your mental wellbeing. According to a recent study published in the *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*, couples can experience high levels of distress and low levels of satisfaction in a relationship, particularly if there is uncertainty about a physical reunion.



Loneliness can be overwhelming and lead to depressive episodes, while insecurity about your partner's behaviour or lack of validation from a social entourage may lead to anxiety. "We rely on having our relationship supported and respected by social connections and when that support isn't there, it can affect the relationship and, in relation, the mental health of the people in the relationship," says Carrie Jenkins, a University of British Columbia professor who researches romantic love.

How far can you get from stereotypical romantic relationships before getting uncomfortable with your feelings and the reactions of your social circle? How comfortable are you with relying on technology for everything from daily updates to sexual intimacy? For Jenkins, these types of questions are crucial for individuals in long-distance relationships to understand.

The more comfortable someone feels with the conditions attached to their long-distance relationship, the more open their communication channels will be and the more opportunity for planning exists. That openness and communication is crucial to maintaining a healthy relationship, whether you are separated by a wall or by a continent.

"You can't start the next chapter of your life if you keep re-reading your last one."

Michael McMillan, speaker, author.



Forming healthy habits, instead of relying on willpower, could make lifestyle changes easier.

Willpower, or self-control, requires mental effort and, just like a muscle, becomes fatigued when exercised too frequently. When you run out of steam, a tired brain wants to grab a cookie or a cigarette.

An overwhelmed brain copes by kicking into default mode. It does this by recruiting a habit. Habits are born through repetitive reflex responses or practices. They occur automatically, without mental effort. About 90 per cent of daily decisions are believed to occur as a result of habits.

Willpower isn't reliable as a means of achieving our goals, but you can create healthy habits.

Habits can take from one to six months to take hold. Change is awkward

at first but, over time, becomes comfortable. Here are suggestions for forming new habits:

- Avoid developing too many habits at once. Work on just one or two, and build from there.
- Habits are easier to develop when the new behaviour is easy to perform. Next time you crave a late-night food binge, soak in a warm tub instead.
- Set attainable goals. Avoid, for example, a complete dietary makeover! Change your food choices for breakfast only and work on other meals later.
- Forming habits is easier when the reward is immediate and tangible. To lose weight, find healthy foods or physical activities you actually enjoy. Make these as convenient and accessible as possible.

Even after you've formed new, healthier habits, you'll still be using willpower. Consider these tips to keep your willpower in top shape:

- Willpower is an intense mental act, using many areas of the brain. This requires adequate fuel, mainly carbohydrates that the body converts to glucose. When blood glucose levels are low, willpower is impaired.

Avoid skipping meals and choose complex carbs like vegetables and whole grains to keep blood glucose levels relatively stable.

- Willpower is affected by sleep loss. Deprived of sleep, we revert to habits that require little mental and physical effort. If you need strength to face a challenge, you need proper rest.
- Exercise improves willpower in a wide range of behaviours, from eating healthier to controlling temper to reducing substance use and even impulsive spending. The type of exercise doesn't matter, but consistency does. Pick something you enjoy so you'll stick with it long enough to make exercise a habit.

Factors from stress to blood sugar interfere with willpower. Permanent change takes effort and time.

A Mindful Health

“Mindfulness is essentially awareness that emerges from paying attention on purpose to the present moment nonjudgmentally,” naturopathic doctor David Denis, faculty member of Toronto’s Centre for Mindfulness Studies, tells *Wellness Matters*. “It’s a way for us, in any given moment, to take in whatever is present for us and being open to it, exploring it, rather than having a knee-jerk reaction to it and pushing it away.”

The practice may not be new, but many practitioners see it as more relevant than ever in today’s fast-paced, ever-connected world. Denis says it’s especially helpful in dealing with stress. “It gives us a little bit more space between stimulus in our everyday lives and our response to it,” he says. “If something happens

that may be a difficult situation, with practice we can start to see our reaction to it and have a bit more time before we engage in a response externally. It helps us disengage from unhelpful responses.”

The capacity for in-the-moment awareness, especially during emotional turmoil, is a skill that can be learned. The best way to get started is to find a group or support network to help you, since it can be challenging at first to practise mindfulness on your own, Denis says.

However, there are many simple ways to incorporate acute awareness into our daily lives. “Start really small to make it manageable,” Denis says. “Maybe take five or even three minutes a day to simply focus on your breathing: the physical experience in your chest,



your nostrils, your abdomen.” For many people, the beginning of the day is a good time to start.

Even for those who have trouble sitting still and doing nothing, being mindful of our everyday

intentions is another aspect to practice. “An important piece of the practice is cultivating qualities of kindness, compassion, interest and curiosity. Being compassionate reduces our own suffering.”

“I like to wake up each morning and not know what I think, that I may reinvent myself in some way.”

Stephen Fry, comedian, actor, author.

Building for Health



Back in 2011, Toronto Public Health released a report titled “Healthy Toronto By Design.” Its goal was to demonstrate how healthy cities evolve: through infrastructure built with creative vision, strategic decision-making and thoughtful implementation to respect the health needs of residents.

This vision, now being witnessed in cities and towns across Canada, has been 30 years in the making. “The contemporary view of urban planning and health emerged in the late ’90s when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization identified chronic diseases as

a leading cause of death,” Joyce Tang, project manager, implementation, urban strategy, with the City of Calgary tells *Wellness Matters*.

Today health is an important consideration for all city developments. “Having a clear understanding of the relationship between urban planning and health has meant that we can plan our cities and build our communities so that they specifically encourage healthy lifestyles by giving people good reasons to go outside,” says Tang.

In Calgary, the City incorporated a health impact assessment when planning the future community of Nose Creek. “We created eight

healthy planning principles that guided the plan,” says Tang. “The area will be well connected by pedestrian-focused streets, have a range of housing types, building forms, gathering spaces, employment opportunities and retail to promote a healthy, active and safe lifestyle for all.”

As researchers better understand societal function, city planners are incorporating these findings to ensure future projects are designed to support everyone’s health. As Tang concludes, it’s about creating “healthy destinations and making the healthy choice easy.”

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