

spring 2022

# wellness matters



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



## COPING in UNCERTAIN TIMES

**A**erial images of mass carnage and shaky video footage of panicked crowds flood our homes daily, as does the rollercoaster news cycle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It's enough to trigger a sense of despair—and unfortunately many people can succumb to this, which causes sleepless nights and mounting emotional stress.

Arlene Tully, a B.C. registered clinical counsellor, says this media onslaught “contributes to existential angst, the perception that everything is terrible and we’re doomed. It also weighs heavily on those who are already dealing with personal problems.”

She adds that the situation has become acute. “News is no longer just at six o’clock or even hourly: it’s broadcast relentlessly, 24/7 to our televisions and mobile devices.”

Fortunately, it is well within one’s capabilities to take control. “The old comeback that you should switch off your television may be overly simplistic,

but it does address the root of this problem,” says Tully. “It may not be feasible—or beneficial—to disconnect entirely from our wired world, but you can take baby steps. Maybe stop receiving news on your smartphone, or establish a certain length of time when you don’t get the news at all.”

Another familiar remedy is to get outside. “Being exposed to one’s natural surroundings can be extremely healing, psychologically speaking,” says Tully.

Yet another familiar but effective strategy is talking with friends. “Expressing your feelings and having them validated can be enormously soothing,” says Tully.

If none of the above is possible, Tully recommends seeking a counsellor. “Identifying and talking through your worries can go a long way in dealing with the constant onslaught of bad news,” she says. “Remember that you are in good company—and that we’re here to help.”

## 10 FAST FACTS

- 1 Swishing coconut oil** in your mouth for up to 25 minutes every day can help whiten teeth.
- 2 Bathing in cold water** revives the immune system and boosts white blood cells.
- 3 Activated charcoal extract** is used to treat stomach complaints and acid indigestion.
- 4 Overhydration can worsen** athletic performance as it reduces the amount of sodium in the body.
- 5 One medium pear** provides six grams of fibre, about 24% of the daily requirement for a woman under 50.
- 6 Pulpy juice** is said to have substantially greater antioxidant effects than clear juice.
- 7 Raynaud’s phenomenon**, a disorder of blood circulation in the fingers and toes, affects four in 10,000 Canadians.
- 8 Studies show** that Raynaud’s phenomenon commonly occurs in workers in certain occupations that involve exposure to vibration, such as tree felling.
- 9 Red rooibos tea** contains quercetin, which is an anti-inflammatory and can help lower blood pressure.
- 10 Yellowing eyes** can indicate a dysfunction of the liver or an iron deficiency.

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ALL PHOTOS: ISTOCK

# The **Big CHEESE**



**I**t has long been thought that saturated fat, the type in full-fat dairy foods, like cheese, yogurt and milk, clogs arteries and raises cholesterol. More recent research suggests that full-fat dairy foods could actually be okay for our hearts, in moderation, and might be better for us than foods high in refined carbohydrates, like white bread, crackers, granola bars and sugary drinks.

Jennifer Sygo, registered dietitian and author of *Unmasking Superfoods*, tells *Wellness Matters*, “one as-yet unanswered question is whether or not the vitamin K2 found in aged, ripened cheeses like Brie,

gouda and cheddar, is actually good for our hearts. It keeps calcium out of our arteries and in our bones, where it belongs.” Sygo notes that more research is still needed to solidify this claim. She also warns that “K2 only exists in measurable amounts in good-quality cheeses, not in processed cheeses.”

While aged, ripened cheeses are regaining popularity, according to Sygo, more common “processed cheese tends to be lower in nutrients and higher in sodium.” When shopping for food, whether it’s at a local supermarket or in restaurants, seek out aged, ripened cheese.

## CHEESE CALORIES (1-ounce servings)

Comparison Adapted from *HealthCastle.com*

CHEESE	TYPE	CALORIES (KCAL)	TOTAL FAT (G)	CALCIUM (MG)	SODIUM (MG)
Blue	Semi-Soft	100	8.2	150	395
Brie	Semi-Soft*	95	7.9	52	178
Camembert	Semi-Soft*	85	6.9	110	239
Cheddar	Semi-Hard	114	9.4	204	176
Cream	Fresh	97	9.7	28	91
Cottage	Fresh	26	0.5	19.6	115
Edam	Semi-Soft	101	7.9	207	274
Feta	Fresh	75	6.0	140	316
Gouda	Hard	101	7.8	198	232
Mascarpone	Fresh	125	13	30	16
Mozzarella, whole milk	Fresh	85	6.3	143	178
Parmesan	Hard	111	7.3	336	454
Provolone	Semi-Soft	100	7.6	214	248
Swiss	Semi-Hard	108	7.9	224	54

\*Soft-ripened cheese



## spring recipe

### Chicken and Mango Spring Rolls

Preparation Time: 30 minutes  
 Servings: 12 servings, 1 roll (72 g) and 1½ tbsp (20 mL) sauce each

#### INGREDIENTS

- 12 rice paper sheets
- ½ lb (225 g) cooked chicken breasts, cut into thin strips
- 1 small mango, peeled, thinly sliced
- 1 cup thin red pepper strips
- 2 green onions, finely chopped
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 4 cups tightly packed arugula
- ½ cup Asian sesame dressing
- ⅓ cup smooth peanut butter
- 1 tsp reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tbsp water

#### INSTRUCTIONS

- Soak rice paper sheets, one at a time, in warm water for one minute or until softened. Place in a single layer on work surface.
- Place chicken on one short end of each sheet; top with mango, pepper, onion, cilantro and arugula.
- Roll up each sheet, starting at the topped end and folding in both sides of the sheet as you roll it up to enclose filling.
- Mix remaining ingredients until blended.
- Serve with spring rolls.

**TIP:** Substitute chopped cooked shrimp for the chicken.

“Why are you trying so hard to fit in when you were born to stand out?”

—Ian Wallace, artist

# Pantry Cleanse

The contents of your pantry, cupboards and fridge are often where healthy eating goals fall off the rails, dietitian Patricia Chuey tells *Wellness Matters*. “A thorough cleansing of the pantry will do far more for your health goals than a one-time detoxifying herbal cleanse for your body.”

Check the list below for what to keep or toss. If you have a lot to clear out, consider including items with a few additional healthy purchases in a food bank donation. In sorting through your stocks, look for ways to trim out excessive salt and sugar while adding fibre.

Homemade versions of almost everything are healthier than commercial items. For example, it is better to keep ingredients on hand to make chili or seasoned rice than to buy processed versions.

If unhealthy snacking is an issue, take an “out of sight, out of mind” approach and don’t stock chips or candy. It is better to buy these as needed or in portion-wise quantities than to keep a supply in the pantry.

If you bake, keep quality ingredients on hand. If you never really have the time or inclination to bake, avoid stocking items like chocolate chips and marshmallows, as they too easily become random snacks.

ITEMS	KEEP	CLEAR OUT
<b>Canned Goods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tuna, salmon, sardines</li> <li>chickpeas</li> <li>lentils</li> <li>legumes</li> <li>tomatoes</li> <li>unsweetened tomato sauce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pasta, chili or other pre-made canned meals</li> <li>ham or sausages</li> </ul>
<b>Pasta, Rice and Grains</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>whole-wheat pasta</li> <li>plain (unseasoned) rice varieties</li> <li>quinoa and/or other whole grains</li> <li>dried legumes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>low-fibre white pasta</li> <li>seasoned side-dish rice or pasta mixes</li> </ul>
<b>Cereal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>rolled oats</li> <li>cold cereals with more than 2 grams of fibre and less than 8 grams of sugar per serving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sugary, low-fibre cereals and cereal bars</li> </ul>
<b>Snack Foods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>nuts, seeds</li> <li>nut butters</li> <li>plain popcorn</li> <li>dried fruit</li> <li>dark chocolate</li> <li>whole-grain tortilla chips</li> <li>high-fibre crackers</li> <li>quality energy bars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>chips</li> <li>pretzels</li> <li>store-bought cookies</li> <li>high-sugar granola or energy bars</li> <li>low-fibre crackers</li> <li>candy</li> </ul>
<b>Beverages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tea, herbal tea</li> <li>coffee</li> <li>club soda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sugary beverage powders (iced tea, lemonade, fruit punches)</li> <li>soda pop</li> </ul>



“Letting go means to come to the realization that some people are a part of your history, but not a part of your destiny.”

—Steve Maraboli, author

# Exercise During Pregnancy



**T**he benefits of exercising during pregnancy are many – it helps boost mood, promotes restful sleep, and can help prepare you for labour and childbirth. And that’s just the start.

“Exercise reduces your chances of gestational diabetes, pregnancy-induced high blood pressure, back pain, incontinence, and varicose veins,” says Melanie Osmack, founder of Fit 4 Two Pre and Postnatal Fitness, which operates across Canada.

“Regular exercise will also give you more energy, reduce stress, and build confidence.”

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC) recommends that all healthy women with uncomplicated pregnancies, regardless of previous activity level or trimester, engage in cardiovascular exercise and muscular conditioning.

However, moms-to-be need to make sure they’re approaching fitness with caution.

Those who haven’t been exercising regularly prior to pregnancy need to start gradually, according to the SOGC, beginning with 15 minutes of continuous exercise a day three times a week and increasing to 30 minutes a day four times a week.

The SOGC and the Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology also have guidelines related

to muscular conditioning. The focus should be on endurance, choosing a resistance that allows you to do two to three sets of 10 to 16 repetitions with good form three times a week. Aim to strength-train three days a week and choose exercises that you enjoy and are comfortable for you.

Be careful at the four-month mark and beyond. “Avoid the supine position after 16 weeks,” Osmack says. In other words, do not exercise lying on your

back. “If you are 16-plus weeks pregnant, any exercise that is done on your back should be done on an incline, with your head above your heart. This will prevent you from becoming dizzy and keep you safe.”

Some sports are a no-go, including scuba diving, ice hockey, and downhill skiing.

Stop any exercise if you experience excessive shortness of breath, chest pain, painful contractions, leakage of amniotic fluid or bleeding.



## The Kettlebell Revolution

The kettlebell exercise trend, often employed in CrossFit programs, is actually the mainstay of a centuries-old Russian military training tradition. In the early 18th century, a “girya” was a cast-iron counterweight used to measure grain shipments. Russian strongmen and the Soviet military introduced the cast-iron balls with handgrips into elaborate routines to improve strength and cardio capacity.

Toronto-based trainer Gerald Griffith converted to the program two years ago. Today, he says, “It’s an efficient tool to get the job done

in less time, combining strength, aerobic and anaerobic cardio training as well as flexibility and mobility. Plus it’s portable and it develops balance, agility, coordination, endurance and stamina.”

Of course, swinging a 32-kilogram ball around is not without danger, nor does it outpace other fitness methods. Alongside traditional methods, kettlebell training—which emphasizes speed and explosiveness—can produce gains in cardiovascular fitness.

As with any new fitness regime, consult a certified trainer before diving in.

“Thoughts are roots; words are leaves; actions are fruits. Every success tree has all working normally!”

—Israelmore Ayivor, author



# Don't Let Allergies Keep You Inside

'Tis the season for outdoor hiking, running and biking; unless you're one of the 20 to 25 per cent of adults suffering from seasonal allergic rhinitis.

For this segment of the population, spring means nasal congestion, itching and sneezing, says Vancouver-based clinical herbal therapist, Vanessa Prescott.

"Allergies are immune reactions," she explains. "Your body reacts to something that's usually harmless, like dust or pollen, and releases antibodies. Then, histamines and other mediators are released into your bloodstream. That causes the classic symptoms."

So, should allergy-sufferers boycott outdoor activities and stick to the gym?

Not necessarily. Decongestants and antihistamines help, and Prescott recommends natural remedies as a long-term solution.

"Reducing dairy is one of the best things you can do, since it encourages mucous to form," Prescott tells *Wellness Matters*, adding that scientific studies have yet to confirm dairy's impact on mucous production. "Antihistamine herbs like nettle or goldenrod also lessen symptoms."

Prescott recommends training in the evening when the pollen count is lower and avoiding high winds. Wear sunglasses, shower and change immediately post-workout to prevent pollen from entering your home.

Luckily for most, allergies are no reason to stay inside, so get out and enjoy the fresh air!

## Stepping Up

**Stepping on a single stair** is a convenient workout done anywhere, even at the office. It can be the cardio part of your regular workout, for heart and lung benefits, or you can use shorter sessions during breaks at the office to strengthen leg muscles and burn calories. A 135-pound person can burn about 150 calories in 20 minutes of stair-stepping.

Kevin Reid, Certified Personal Trainer in Surrey, B.C., tells *Wellness Matters* that beginners should use a seven-inch height or less. (The standard height of a stair is about seven inches.) A higher platform quickly exhausts the unfit and may cause injury. Use a sturdy box, platform or the bottom step of a staircase. You can gradually increase the height as fitness improves, but

never higher than a height that causes the knees to bend more than 90 degrees.

Use the proper technique to avoid injury. Place the entire foot on the step to distribute body weight evenly over the whole foot. When stepping off the platform, step down, not back, and always land with toes close to the step's base. Reaching too far back with the leading leg when stepping down results in sore calves, "and it also makes the body lean forward, putting more stress on the lower back and the ball of the foot," says Reid.

Step up with your left foot, and then up with the right. Step down with the left and follow with the right (change the leading foot periodically). Repeat this stepping pattern at a steady, controlled pace.



For quick calorie-burn breaks at the office, step for several five-minute sessions throughout the day. But slip into supportive shoes first,

Reid advises; cross-training or aerobic shoes offer shock absorbency and stability. And don't forget to do a few leg stretches afterward!

"If you ever know a man who tries to drown his sorrows, kindly inform him his sorrows know how to swim."

—Pittacus Lor, author

# Attacking Your Anxiety



**A**nxiety attacks are the most common mental health concern, affecting around 5% of the population, according to the Canadian Mental Health Association. However, it is essential to understand the difference between what is considered normal anxiety and an anxiety disorder.

“There is the natural fight or flight response, for example, that motivates you to get out of the way of a speeding car. Then there’s an anxiety attack that is brought on when we think of things in an apprehensive manner, such as a breakup,” Jim Folk, president of anxietycentre.com in Alberta tells *Wellness Matters*.

Anxiety attacks have two causes: voluntary, caused by anxious thinking, and involuntary caused by stress. “When a person is under sustained stress the body can mismanage some of its regulatory functions, which can result in involuntary panic attacks,” says Folk.

Most anxiety attacks are caused by anxious thinking. Involuntary anxiety attacks often occur after the stress has passed because adrenaline, a stress

hormone, masks pain and discomfort. “When we start to gear down it un masks how the body really feels,” Folk explains.

While symptoms of an anxiety attack can include an elevated heart rate, shortness of breath, lightheadedness and sweating, sometimes a person may not experience any symptoms other than a strong feeling of impending doom. To help prevent panic attacks, identifying and dealing with the cause is essential. However, if you do suffer from panic attacks or feel one coming on, Folk suggests the following:

- Keep your stress in check.
- Learn the anatomy of a panic attack. Understanding will prevent you from responding with fear.
- Stop scaring yourself by imagining the worst. Shut those stress hormones off.
- Use relaxed diaphragmatic breathing, not chest breath. Contract the muscle between the chest and the stomach. Then release the air through the mouth.
- Distract yourself. Chew or suck on an ice cube, or put something in your hand.
- Realize a panic attack will end.



## Changing Minds

**DBT is the new acronym** on the psychological block. Dr. Christine Sloss, a clinical psychologist at Toronto’s Broadview Psychology, is part of one of the leading private clinics in Canada offering Dialectical Behavioural Treatment for children and adults.

DBT was developed in the 1980s by a team in Washington state headed by psychologist Marsha Linehan, says Dr. Sloss. It was originally used in suicidal women with borderline personality disorder, but is now used for a broad range of clients who have difficulty in behaviour regulation, anxiety and mood and anger issues.

DBT is a comprehensive and integrative treatment that incorporates Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, acceptance and mindfulness approaches, and dialectics, the latter referring to the process of finding middle ground in the opposing concepts of acceptance and change.

The model incorporates individual, group and family therapy, as well as phone and text coaching to promote in-the-moment good decision-making skills.

Treatment can be expensive, and typically lasts at least a year. Family involvement is key to the approach. “We treat the core problems,” Sloss says, “not the diagnoses or symptoms.”

Sloss says research, including randomized control trials in many different countries, support the method. Public programs are beginning to incorporate some DBT group work, but “there are too few DBT programs that are comprehensive. And rarely in smaller communities.”

**“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”**

—Mahatma Gandhi, political leader

# Are You Internet-Addicted?

**You see it everywhere** – in restaurants, at hockey games, even at stoplights: people with their heads down, focused on their phones instead of what’s around them. Canadians spend an average of 75 hours a month online on various devices, according to comScore Canada. So if everyone is doing it, how do you know when that habit has become an addiction?

“It’s not just those kids who won’t leave their parents’ basement,” Jason Jones, a psychologist and addictions counsellor with Edmonton’s Insight Psychological, told *Wellness Matters*. “We’re seeing this with very functional people.” Jones says people turn to the Internet to fulfill the human need to connect, but can end up shutting themselves off from those around them. Because Internet addiction is too



## RECOGNIZING ADDICTION

Jones says generational differences and the ubiquity of mobile phones can make it challenging to distinguish between normal and problematic use. He suggests considering the following questions to determine if it’s time to seek help:

- Is your usage steadily increasing?
- Do you continually need more to maintain the same sense of satisfaction?
- Are you physically endangering yourself because you aren’t paying attention?
- Are you aware of negative consequences, but you still can’t stop?

new to have official diagnostic criteria, recognizing it can be difficult. In his practice, Jones draws the line when device dependency causes damage in his patients’ real lives.

“Ask yourself: Is this affecting your job or your relationships? Is it preventing you from exercising? Are you bringing [your phone] into the shower?” says Jones. “The tricky part is moving people into a safe place where they can contemplate it without getting defensive.”



# Rumour Has It

**Paul Kemp is the first to admit** he’s a gossip. But the film producer isn’t about spreading nasty rumours. Rather, he finds that talking about others is a way of having a real human connection. “I go to a cottage area every summer, and even though it’s small, everyone knows everyone else’s business,” he says. “I became fascinated by how interested I am in hearing about everybody. In Toronto, people are less connected. I was intrigued by how gossip made my life more interesting and how I felt connected to people around me.”

Kemp went on to produce the documentary *The Real Dirt on Gossip*. He discovered that although gossip is often portrayed negatively, it can sometimes be good for people.

Gossiping can teach lessons and act as a deterrent: if we’re placing moral judgment on others, we don’t want to veer away from what’s socially acceptable ourselves.

Of all human connection, 66% involves talking about ourselves and others, research shows. Men and women gossip equally, with people tending to talk about people of their own age, sex, and race. However, men tend to discuss politics, work, and intellectual subjects, while women dish more on emotions and other women. Both sexes gossip about sex, social status and money.

At the office, those considered “good work gossipers” tend to be well-liked, make more money and have higher status, and are seen as having good information that others want.

Gossip can be used to hurt others, but far more often it’s engaged in for pleasure. More than 90% of all “juicy” conversations are an attempt to get at the truth, while less than 10% is deliberately false “scandal” gossip.

The trick to being a “good” gossip is to have your facts straight, to avoid speaking maliciously of others and to keep confidences if you’re asked. “Gossip is what makes us human,” Kemp says. “It connects us.”

“Biology gives you a brain. Life turns it into a mind.”

—Jeffrey Eugenides, author



# VEGGIES CAN HELP THIN YOUR BLOOD

**E**ating your veggies may be just as effective as Aspirin to thin the blood for heart-health benefits, several studies suggest. Did you know that the active ingredient in Aspirin is salicylic acid, which is found naturally in willow bark and many vegetables? While few people will want to chew on bark, several studies have shown that eating your veggies may be just as effective as Aspirin to thin the blood and benefit the heart.

Surrey Nutrition Coach, Eve Lees, says there are no side effects from food sources of

salicylic acid, as there may be from taking Aspirin regularly (it may damage the lining of the digestive tract and increase risk of bleeding).

Lees adds that many studies, including the Framingham Heart Study, all show heart disease can be prevented with less focus on animal-based foods and greater priority on

those plant-based (vegetables, fruit, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds).

Heart disease is the second leading cause of death among Canadians. If taking blood-thinners such as Aspirin could lower heart-disease risk, perhaps that's a message we should eat more veggies, suggests Lees.

## WHAT ARE THE BEST VEGETABLES TO EAT?

All are superfoods! Each has its own unique properties (not just salicylic acid) to keep you healthy. Avoid limiting your choices; include a wide variety of vegetables in your diet to get a wide variety of nutrients.

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Canada Wide Media Limited,  
230, 4321 Still Creek Drive, Burnaby,  
B.C., V5C 6S7.

fax: 604.299.9188  
website: [www.wellness-matters.ca](http://www.wellness-matters.ca)  
email: [info@wellness-matters.ca](mailto:info@wellness-matters.ca)

For sales and subscriptions please contact Tracy McRitchie at 604.473.0388 or [tmcritchie@canadawide.com](mailto:tmcritchie@canadawide.com)

**Editor:** Alyssa Hirose

**Executive Creative Director:** Rick Thibert

**Art Director:** Scott Laurie

**Publisher:** Samantha Legge, MBA

**Advisory Board:** Patricia Chuey, R.D.,  
Chris Cunningham, M.D.

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