

spring 2020

# wellness matters



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

## The Truth about Peanut Allergies



**S**ome potentially game-changing research about peanut allergies indicates new ways to help keep children healthy.

A British study conducted by Dr. Gideon Lack, a professor of pediatric allergy at King's College London, used the Israeli peanut-based snack Bamba as the basis of his research to determine whether peanut allergies can be prevented by feeding children nut-based products beginning in infancy.

Bamba, the top-selling snack in Israel, contains 50 percent peanuts and is fortified with vitamins and minerals. Many Israeli families buy it regularly; kids snack on it from early infancy. Yet rates of peanut allergy in Israeli children are low. The study's conclusion, and an accompanying editorial in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, suggests that most peanut allergies can be prevented by feeding young children food containing peanuts

beginning in infancy, rather than avoiding them.

McMaster University allergist and immunologist Dr. Susan Wasserman has been running a clinical trial on peanut allergies since 2011 involving 32 children. Her study focus is on desensitizing.

"We were able to desensitize 20 children by learning that these children can tolerate two peanuts a day... We're going to see whether they can tolerate more," Wasserman told the *Hamilton Spectator*.

This doesn't mean that the approach is ready for families or their doctors at this point, Wasserman warns. She says that while desensitizing is a new method, and she is excited about initial results, her end game is a vaccine that would make eating peanuts safe for everyone of all ages.

## 10 FAST FACTS

**1 An average-sized avocado** has 30 grams of fat, most of it healthy monounsaturated fat that can help lower low-density lipoprotein (LDL, or "bad") cholesterol levels.

**2 Walking** for 30 minutes burns about 150 calories. If you walked for that long every day for six months, you could burn off five pounds.

**3 Expelling** green mucus from your mouth or nose can be a sign the illness you're fighting is coming to an end.

**4 Sunscreen** is a necessity year-round. The earth's surface is actually closer to the sun in winter, plus snow and ice reflect and amplify harmful UV rays.

**5 Legumes** (chickpeas, beans, lentils) are one of the richest sources of fibre in our diet.

**6 Smoking**, combined with taking birth control pills, can increase the risk of blood clots and even heart attack/stroke.

**7 Cooking chicken** with the skin on won't increase the fat content of the meat: just be sure to remove the skin before eating.

**8 Cold viruses** grow best at about 33 degrees Celsius (91 degrees Fahrenheit).

**9 Choose dark chocolate** with 70-85% cacao content; it's higher in magnesium, copper and manganese.

**10 Some studies** show that more patients are admitted to hospital for heart attacks, and that the risk of heart attack increases, immediately following the switch to Daylight Savings Time (in 2020 happening on March 8). Don't over-exert on the first bright, sunny day!

Inside

**3 Clean out your pantry**

**5 Should you stretch before or after exercise?**

**7 Cultivate a gratitude practice that sticks**



## 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 top 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.

## To Market, to Market

The more we grow our own food, the greater our contribution to a sustainable food supply. By growing a garden, we gain control over how the food is grown and reduce the amount of handling it receives on its journey from source to plate. Since we don't all live where we have garden space, frequently shopping at farmers' markets is the perfect way to expand our consumption of locally grown produce.

Spring is opening season for local farmers' markets in Canada. Although the peaches and blueberries we love won't be ready for a few more months, spring is a wonderful time to reap the benefits of these nutritional gems:



- **Spinach and other leafy greens** – loaded with heart-healthy folic acid and fibre, spring salads add crunch and nutrition after a season of wintery meals.
- **Fresh herbs** – basil, dill, mint and other herbs bring flavour and nutrients to meals, reducing the need for salt. Garlic tops and green onions are abundant now and also add antioxidants to meals.
  - **Asparagus** – with just 20 calories in a 100 g serving, elegant asparagus is perfect alongside a brunch quiche or grilled fish meal, while also adding vitamin A, fibre and potassium.
  - **Rhubarb** – add that classic fresh tartness, along with vitamin C and fibre, to muffins and fruit crisps.
- **Strawberries** – near the end of the spring season, strawberries begin to appear. Spring is a great time to freeze Vitamin C and fibre-rich strawberries for use in fall and winter smoothies.

“Success is going from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm.”  
 - Winston Churchill, politician

# 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.

Canned goods	Pasta, rice and grains	Cereal	Snack foods	Beverages
<p><b>Keep</b></p> <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> <p><b>Clear out</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ pasta, chili or other pre-made canned meals</li> <li>~ ham or sausages</li> </ul>	<p><b>Keep</b></p> <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> <p><b>Clear out</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ low-fibre white pasta</li> <li>~ seasoned side-dish rice or pasta mixes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Keep</b></p> <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> <p><b>Clear out</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ sugary, low-fibre cereals and cereal bars</li> </ul>	<p><b>Keep</b></p> <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> <p><b>Clear out</b></p> <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>	<p><b>Keep</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ tea, herbal tea</li> <li>✓ coffee</li> <li>✓ club soda</li> </ul> <p><b>Clear out</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ sugary beverage powders (iced tea, lemonade, fruit punches)</li> <li>~ soda pop</li> </ul>

“A year from now you may wish you had started today.”  
- Karen Lamb, author



Pilates and hatha yoga “allow for strengthening and also for people to move through a range of motion gently while thinking mindfully about how you align the joints,” she adds. “They incorporate the breath, which calms the central nervous system. People leave these programs feeling really great mentally and physically. They incorporate the muscular system as well as the soul.”

Gentle practice is vital when you’re embarking on a fitness regime, recovering from injury or experiencing limited mobility, because it’s easier on the body than more vigorous forms and reduces the risk of injury.

It’s effective, too. Tai chi, for instance, boosts muscle strength and improves flexibility, according to a 2006 study published in *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*.

Other gentle forms include the Feldenkrais method, a system of flowing movements that promotes self-awareness; yin yoga, in which poses are held for long periods; and inclusive, or adaptive, yoga, where yogis with physical challenges practice, alongside able-bodied participants.

To get started, Palliardi suggests signing up for a small-group beginners’ class where you’ll get some personalized attention. Seek an instructor who is well-versed in body alignment. Then relax, move your body and breathe.

**T**he word “fitness” may bring to mind long-distance running or intense, sweaty workouts. But gentle exercise is another form, and it can be the answer when starting an exercise program, recovering from an injury, or staying active at an advanced age or with a reduced state of mobility.

“As you get more wear and tear on the joints, you don’t move with as much agility,” says Fleur Palliardi, a certified Pilates instructor at Vancouver’s YWCA Health and Fitness Centre. “As people get older, they start to look for movement that’s going to make them feel good. They want to be more active because they want to be able to walk and move with ease.”



## Post-Exercise **Recovery**

**Spring is a popular time** for getting back into consistent exercise routines. To stay fuelled for activity, what you eat and drink after exercising is as important as what you eat before.

Carbohydrates, protein and water are the top three tools in the recovery repair kit. Recovery nutrition replenishes energy stores and repairs any damage your body and muscles experienced while exercising. A well-balanced recovery meal or snack should be consumed immediately after, or within two hours of, exercising. It is especially important for athletes who have less than 24 hours before their next workout to replenish within the first 20-30 minutes

to ensure muscle glycogen (energy stores) is topped up before the next exercise session.

A ratio of three parts carbohydrate to one part protein promotes the best glycogen re-uptake by the muscles. Chocolate milk meets this criteria while also providing hydration. Other easy snacks include yogurt with fruit and a little granola, whole-wheat toast with hard-boiled egg, or a slice of turkey with cheese and an apple.

To rehydrate after a workout, drink to satisfy your thirst, then keep drinking a little bit more. Water is best for rehydration; if using a sports drink for recovery, inspect labels carefully to ensure it is intended for recovery rather than endurance activity.

**“If you're not using your smile, you're like a man with a million dollars in the bank and no chequebook.”**

- Les Giblin, personal development pioneer

# Take Meetings on the **Move**

Whether you're powering through afternoon meetings or fighting rush-hour traffic, nowadays, it's not uncommon to sit for three, four, or even eight or more hours a day.

According to a study conducted at Pennington Biomedical Research Center and Harvard School of Public Health, prolonged sitting (for more than three hours a day) could shorten your life by two years – even if you don't smoke and are physically active.

Modern living is a far cry from the agrarian ways of our ancestors, but you don't need to live at the gym to reap the benefits of an active lifestyle. To start, skip the boardroom and hold walking

meetings instead.

"If you like fresh air and the outdoors, walking meetings are a great way to get moving," Nicole Yamanaka, senior kinesiologist and owner at Le Physique Health & Fitness in Vancouver tells *Wellness Matters*. "Beyond the exercise, I'm convinced that the change of scenery does wonders for creativity and productivity," she adds.

To avoid logistical challenges, Nicole suggests holding walking meetings in small groups and in situations where technology isn't needed. When it comes to exercise, everything adds up – so round up your colleagues, lace up and get moving.



## Should You **Stretch?**

**Recent studies have concluded** that the ritual of stretching before a workout may not be as beneficial as we once thought. For example, stretching before exercising does not prevent muscle soreness after you exercise. And one study that looked specifically at weightlifting concluded that stretching actually reduced muscle strength.

Perhaps one misunderstanding that has led to people spending a long time stretching at the beginning of their workout is the idea that this will prevent injuries. There are actually no studies that support this! One study suggests that muscles may actually lose flexibility if they are overworked, and then be unable to provide the power or force they would have had before.

On the positive side, stretching can result in greater range of motion and flexibility, which is important in helping people perform their daily activities and may help prevent falls and injuries. For some people, stretching makes them feel good. For this group, it makes sense to continue, as the process will not harm them. And some argue that the process of stretching helps ease muscles that are already sore, but be careful with this as you can easily make the problem worse.

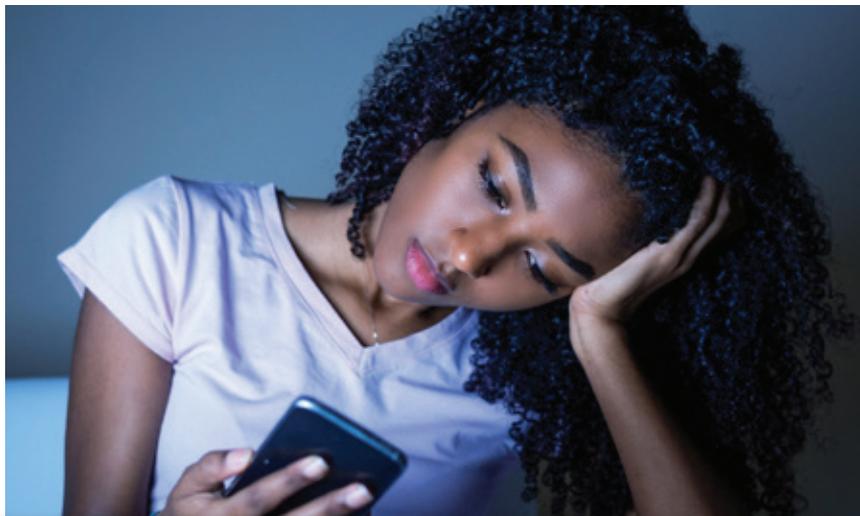
There is little disagreement, however, that warming up the body is essential in preparing for a workout; that is, start the activity at a lower intensity. Walk before you run. This is thought to reduce the sudden stress on your heart that occurs during your workout, but is not a factor in reducing injuries or soreness. And it will have the benefit of warming up your muscles as well: warm muscles function better than cold ones.



**"Someday is not a day of the week."**  
- Denise Brennan-Nelson, author

**Y**ou 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



# Are You Internet-Addicted?

Internet addiction is too 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.”

## 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?

## Mental Health App-titude

Given the ubiquity of smartphones as a primary tool of information-gathering, it’s really no surprise that app developers recognize the mental health field as an opportunity. But Canadians could benefit from the influx of options; according to the Canadian Mental Health Association, 20 percent of Canadians will personally experience a mental illness in their lifetime.

The benefit of mobile-friendly websites and apps is their on-the-go flexibility: users can tap into the programs whenever



symptoms of their mental illness flare up. Furthermore, the more mental health apps in the marketplace, the more opportunity to engage Canadians in discussion about mental illness. “Most Canadians access

health care exclusively through a primary care setting, be it a physician’s office or a family health team,” says Dr. David Goldbloom, co-editor of *Psychiatry in Primary Care* and senior medical adviser at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. Not only do those primary-care practitioners need access to credible information at their fingertips, increasingly patients seek it as well.

In its Mental Health Action Plan, the World Health Organization recommends “the promotion of self-care, for instance, through the use of electronic and mobile health technologies.”

If you plan to play in the mental health app arena though, consult your doctor. No app should be used to replace professional treatment.

“To avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing, be nothing.”

- Elbert Hubbard, writer and artist

# Cultivate a Gratitude Practice that Sticks

**Almost everywhere we look** these days, we're reminded that gratitude is the best attitude. According to Dr. Rotem Regev, registered psychologist at the Vancouver Couple & Family Institute, practising gratitude can literally change the way we think.

"Numerous studies show a connection between gratitude and self-reported well-being," Regev tells *Wellness Matters*. "Gratitude is even thought to improve self-esteem, body image and the quality of relationships," she adds. "Since gratitude allows us to slow down and check in with ourselves, it can also be helpful for managing difficult feelings."

So, what's the secret to creating a daily gratitude practice with staying power? "Try pairing your gratitude practice with something you do every day, like brushing your teeth or drinking your morning coffee," Dr. Regev suggests. "You could place a keepsake next to your toothbrush or coffee mug for a visual reminder," she adds.

"Just like everything in life, gratitude is cultivated over time," Regev says. "It's okay if you don't feel grateful in the moment. You set the intention, and that's what matters." With time and practice, however, gratitude becomes habitual, and that's where the real shifts happen.



## Share your gratitude with others

To deepen personal relationships and expand feelings of gratitude beyond yourself, Regev suggests sharing words of appreciation with a friend or loved one. "Keeping a gratitude journal is a great start, but what if we shared our gratitude with others?" she asks. "When we tell someone just how much we appreciate them, we feel grateful, and they feel touched and appreciated."

# Breathe In, Breathe Out

**You're sweating profusely**, you can't stop shaking, your heart is pounding and you feel an impending sense of doom—you might be experiencing a panic attack.

"Panic attacks can happen anywhere and their signs and symptoms develop extremely fast. They come on like a sneeze," says Dr. Sheila Woody, professor of psychology at the University of British Columbia.

Other signs that you're suffering from a panic attack may include

nausea or upset stomach, feeling dizzy or faint, numbing or tingling sensations, hot or cold flashes, intense fear, shortness of breath, a feeling of imminent doom or terrifying thoughts.

"From beginning to end, a panic attack will only last about 10 minutes," says Woody. Although doctors are still unclear as to what causes panic attacks, they have found that they are often connected with phobias, alcohol or drug abuse, depression and suicidal thoughts.

Although a panic attack isn't very pleasant, it's typically not dangerous. "If you're starting to feel anxious, the best thing to do is breathe deeply as it will calm you," says Woody.

On a positive note, panic attacks are the most treatable anxiety disorder doctors deal with. "There are many great cognitive coping mechanisms that can really help," she adds.



**"Gluttony is an emotional escape, a sign something is eating us."**

- Peter De Vries, editor and novelist



# Take these Health-boosting Habits to Work

**Store some walking shoes** at work. If you have a chance to slip away from work at lunch or on a break, slip into your sneakers to walk briskly around the block.

Check your ergonomics. Your computer station or desk area should be properly positioned to ensure comfort and prevent repetitive-strain injuries.

Limit caffeine and opt more often for herbal tea or water. More than four cups of coffee a day can dehydrate you and cause jitteriness.

Bring a nutritious lunch and snacks as often as possible throughout the week to lower your temptation to eat high-fat or high-calorie fast foods. It can

also save you money.

List your priorities. A to-do list in order of most important to least important helps you stay on track and focused.

Think positively. Your thinking dramatically affects how you feel. Keep the day pleasant by seeing and approaching your perceived “problems” as “challenges.”

Manage conflicts and stressors by speaking up. When something bothers you at work, talk it over diplomatically with someone like a co-worker or a manager.

Finally, avoid taking your work home with you. Try to leave work and its “challenges” at work, to enjoy time out with family and friends.

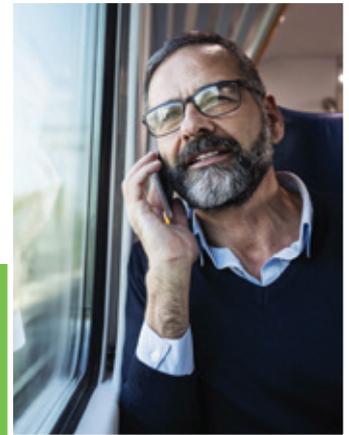
# Returning to Work

**Returning to work** after a serious or lengthy illness can be daunting, but regular involvement in something productive (whether paid or not) helps bring structure and meaning to our lives. Work provides human interaction, a sense of self-worth and a schedule around which to plan other activities. Although Canadian employers have a duty to accommodate employees with disabilities, the nature of your illness may require you to re-evaluate the type of work that you are capable of or that you want to perform.

It is in your best interests to provide your employer with as much information as possible for them to be able to accommodate your needs. Be up-front with them about what you will need to be successful and provide any health-care information pertaining to those accommodations.

Before returning to work, you could practise what that will be like. Adjust your schedule so that you get up at the same time you will when you are working. Dress in work clothes. Take transit to your workplace, or drive there in traffic to practise these skills.

In advance, you could also do activities that are similar to what you would do at work. Outside of your working hours, practise the other activities that you will be performing – cooking, shopping, laundry, child care – that are part of working life. This will help you transition back to your regular routines so that the change in your lifestyle is not too overwhelming.



## Some things to consider are:

- Does your health mean you may need to find a new line of work?
- Will you need to upgrade your skills?
- Are there volunteer activities or courses you could participate in while you are off work?
- Would part-time work or volunteering be an effective way to ease back into work?
- Is your workplace willing and able to offer flexible working hours?

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