

Personal Health newsletter

PRACTICAL INFORMATION FOR A HEALTHFUL LIFESTYLE

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*Helping
you make
your own
decisions
about your
personal
health . . .*



Exercise is important but nutrition should come first

Pondering a resolution for this New Year? Make a promise to improve your diet.

Many of us have exercise goals as a New Year's resolution and that's fine, especially if you've always been inactive. However, what you put in your mouth is the foundation that *allows* you to be physical. Food fuels your every movement, even those movements you can't voluntarily control (heartbeat, cell reproduction, etc.).

Hippocrates advised to let food be your medicine. And in a way, it is. Everything you eat is broken down by that incredibly efficient *factory*; the human body. Food becomes the tools our bodies need to survive. If you don't give it the right tools, in the short term you become less efficient in doing anything physical or mental. In the long term, you risk imbalances that can lead to disease and disorder. Hundreds of studies and research projects have shown the importance of a healthy diet; from relieving depression to lowering our risk for illnesses.

Sadly, processed, refined foods make up the majority of what we eat today. We live in a fast-paced society where we have become dependent on the time-saving convenience of fast foods. Unfortunately, these "designer" foods are far too advanced for the unique simplicity of the human digestive system.

Our digestive systems are designed to slowly and methodically break down a whole food into the nutrients it needs. Refined sugars and other processed foods are already broken down and will be absorbed very quickly, creating confusion in the synchronized stages of the digestive process. Eating them too frequently is confusing and stressful to the body. Over time, imbalances are created. In addition, processed foods are generally high in fat and/or sugar, and have lost many nutrients vital for good health – like fibre, vitamins and minerals. A vitamin/mineral pill can't replace the many known nutrients (and those yet to be discovered) that are lost when food is processed.



Eating these tampered-with renditions of Mother Nature's bounty won't affect our health if eaten infrequently – so go ahead and treat yourself once in awhile. However, breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks for the average person today is mostly food that doesn't resemble its original form: bread, cookies, sausages, French fries, snack bars, milkshakes, and sodas didn't occur that way naturally.

Obesity, diabetes, cancers and heart disease are increasingly prevalent today. Our wide selection of "convenience foods" contributes greatly to our declining health. Processed, refined foods stress and exhaust the digestive system and lack the nutrition needed to strengthen our immune system and ensure good health.

Find a healthy balance in your food choices. More often, choose to eat the foods our bodies can properly process; *whole foods that aren't as tampered with or changed by humans*. Choose an apple as a snack instead of a cookie or sports bar. Try to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, cooked whole grains, and natural meat choices. Save the processed, refined "fast foods" as an occasional treat.

Take the time in 2012 to learn about healthy eating. If possible, consult with a Registered Dietician (RD) to discuss your current diet and any changes needed. Resolving to improve your diet on January 1st will improve your health for the rest of your life. ❸❸❸

Staying healthy in a toxic world

No matter how careful we are, we still unknowingly ingest or absorb chemicals in food, drugs, water, air, etc. They are everywhere. In fact, many chemicals and toxins are found naturally in nature.

The human body is designed to deal with chemicals in moderate amounts. However, those with compromised health, and people frequently exposed to toxins, are at a higher risk for many health problems.

The liver's chief role is to "detoxify" the body. Alcohol, drugs, caffeine, chemicals, and natural plant toxins are quickly filtered by the liver, converted into harmless forms and excreted. But larger doses of these chemicals and toxins can overwhelm the liver, causing problems in that organ and other organs as well. Some toxins are stored in body fat. Therefore, it's also important to lose any excess body fat to minimize toxins being stored in your body.

Chemicals are one of several factors that cause free radical damage in our bodies. Free radicals are unstable molecules—a natural "waste product" created from such things as physical exertion, mental stress, exposure to sunlight, as well as chemical exposure. And excess of free radicals can cause dangerous chain reactions within the cell.

Antioxidants are our best defense to fight these free radicals. Some antioxidants come from our diet, like vitamins C and E, and flavonoids. Our bodies also make many enzymes to neutralize free radicals. Our ability to create these enzymes depends on the availability of the nutrients in our foods. Therefore a good diet is necessary to help us cope with toxins.

Why do chemicals affect some people more than others? Most of us are able to cope with chemical pollution; our bodies seem to easily repair and recuperate after mild daily exposure. However for some people, environmental toxins create immediate and serious health problem. Some are hypersensitive to chemicals, showing severe reactions to even small doses of chemicals. The body's natural detoxification mechanisms have become overwhelmed, perhaps from toxic overload or dietary insufficiency. Professional help is needed to strengthen the body and eliminate unnecessary stress.

Young children and the developing fetus are more vulnerable to toxins because their protective systems are not fully developed. While pregnant and breast feeding, it is important

to eat well and reduce chemical exposure.

Here are three simple steps everyone can follow to stay healthy in a toxic environment:

1) **Minimize exposure.** Learn which chemicals may be in your environment and actively avoid them where possible. Consider household cleaners, personal care products, your workplace, and which factories are in your area. Organic, whole foods are the best options to avoid chemicals in food. But if organic foods aren't available, choose fresh, seasonal vegetables and fruit, locally grown. These will have fewer chemicals. Wash all fresh foods well and peel those that you can (fruit and cucumber, for example).

2) **Enhance your ability to deal with toxins** by eating foods high in antioxidants and other nutrients. Eat plenty of fresh vegetables and fruit, which are rich in many nutrients, especially vitamin C. Vitamin E is important too (rich in vegetable oils, whole grains, nuts and seeds).

Selenium, zinc, manganese, and copper are vital minerals for the detoxifying enzymes. These are best obtained from whole foods like seafood, meat, nuts and seeds, whole grains.

Fibre-rich whole foods help ensure waste matter is regularly cleared through the bowels.

Minimize food and drinks that burden the liver, such as alcohol, caffeine, and refined sugar. Alcohol severely depletes our antioxidant stores.

3) **Detoxify.** Fasting isn't a good idea for many people, unless it is doctor recommended and supervised. However, here are more gentle ways to help detoxify your body:

Start your day with a cup of hot water and lemon juice. Lemons are *thought* to be a great internal "cleanser."

Don't overeat so as not to overload the digestive system. And chew your food slowly and completely to assist in the efficient breakdown and absorption of the nutrients in the food.

Drink water daily. You shower to clean yourself externally, so consider drinking water as your internal shower.

Roughage is also a great internal cleanser. If water is your internal "shower," roughage is the "scrubbing brush." Make your diet high in foods like broccoli, celery, apples, whole grains, legumes, and other foods high in fibre.

Do regular light to moderate exercise to increase circulation and stimulate the lymphatic system. **Continued p. 3**

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Getting healthier while you sleep!

Lack of sleep has many side effects. Sleep loss affects cognitive ability. If you think you're smart now, even though you don't seem to need much sleep, think how much smarter you *could* be! Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania found significant impairment in reflexes and thinking in those limited to four and six hours sleep nightly. Surprisingly, the study participants reported feeling only slightly sleepy, despite the drastic decline in their mind and body performances. This proves that even if you think your lack of sleep is not affecting you, it most likely is.

It was once believed six hours of sleep was enough to repair the wear and tear on the brain and the body. However, after two weeks, those who slept six hours had impairment equal to one night without sleep. Sleeping only four hours nightly for two weeks shows impairment equal to going two days without sleep.

Studies show sleep deprivation can affect our memory, reaction time, judgement abilities, the ability to reason logically, mathematical and verbal skills, and the ability to handle stress.

One night of insufficient sleep can reduce the level of infection fighting immune cells, reports *Psychosomatic Medicine*. In one study, participants were kept awake from 3:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. Researchers found a significant decline of natural killer cell activity that is important in resistance to viral infections. Fortunately, after a following full night of sleep, immune functions returned to normal. However, if you suffer regularly from sleep loss, your good health could be at risk.

Lack of sleep can also cause muscle loss and affect your attempts to lose weight.

Sleep loss will affect the production of HGH or human growth hormone, which is released by the pituitary gland. This peptide hormone plays a role in several functions

that keep us looking and feeling young. After about age 20, HGH production begins to decrease. During the deepest stage of sleep, your body gets most of its daily dose of human growth hormone (HGH). With sleep loss, the body lacks the exposure to HGH to keep muscles healthy. Muscle tissue becomes weak which will affect muscle strength and development. Muscle is the key to having a faster metabolic rate: The more muscle you have, the more efficiently you'll burn body fat.

Those who lose sleep on a regular basis can lack motivation, making them less likely to exercise or stick to an exercise program. Sleep loss can also negatively affect the motivation needed in dieting. It's often an overlooked factor in obesity, say researchers at the Stanford University Sleep Disorders Clinic and Research Center.

Cravings are stimulated by sleep loss. After only five or six hours of sleep, studies find a boost in cravings for high carbohydrate food, possibly to give energy.

An increase of ghrelin is noted in those who lack sleep. This is a hormone that increases appetite. Also noticed is a decrease in leptin, a hormone that decreases appetite.

Lack of sleep has also been found to raise the blood levels of the stress hormone cortisol. This interferes with the satiety signals from the brain, making you feel hungry even when you are full.

Sleep loss also affects glucose metabolism and insulin resistance. Short sleepers are more likely to develop diabetes. Someone who typically sleeps less than six hours each night is considered a "short sleeper."

The human body needs to rest and recuperate and a good night's sleep is necessary for everyone. The average amount of sleep needed by an adult is 7 or 8 hours. ~~###~~

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Stay healthy in a toxic world

Exercise will also reduce body fat, where excess toxins can be stored.

Increasing dietary minerals, such as copper and zinc, will bind with and release toxic metals from the body. Some good sources of zinc and copper are nuts and seeds, whole grains, and sea vegetables such as dulse, kelp, wakame, or nori.

We can't escape industrial chemicals. However, for most healthy people, a small amount of chemical pollution can actually stimulate and strengthen detoxifying mechanisms in the body. If you can control and limit as much of your toxic exposure as possible (i.e. with your diet), you *can* remain healthy in a toxic world. ~~###~~

Laughter

Do not try to live forever. You will not succeed.
– George Bernard Shaw

Some cause happiness wherever they go; others
whenever they go. – Oscar Wilde

A bank is a place where they lend you an umbrella in
fair weather and ask for it back when it begins to rain.
– Robert Frost

What women want: To be loved, to be listened to, to be
desired, to be respected, to be needed, to be trusted,
and sometimes, just to be held. What men want:
Tickets for the World Series. – Dave Barry ~~###~~

Health tips for the New Year . . .

• Sitting for too long can aggravate lower back pain. A seated position can compress the spine, because the legs are unable to bear some of the pressure. Get up and pace around as often as you can. Remove your wallet when you do have to sit for a long time. Sitting on a fat wallet can unbalance the hips, putting more stress on the spine.

• When it comes to the nutritional quality of your food, nutritionists advise fresh as a first choice, frozen next, and canned last – but the differences among them are too small to worry about. However, since food is frozen at its nutritional peak, frozen fare can be richer in vitamins and minerals than fruit and vegetables sitting too long at the grocer's.

• Your muscles should rest for about 24 to 48 hours after they've been stressed by weight training exercises. Muscles need time to remove waste matter and receive the repairing nourishment from your diet. If you don't allow this period of repairing and rebuilding to occur, you'll risk damage or loss of muscle tissue.

• Aging poorly is mostly due to the accumulation of a lifetime of poor eating and exercise habits.

• The cancer rate would drop an estimated twenty percent if Canadians ate five to ten servings of vegetables

and fruit each day

• Of all types of cancer, exercise has the best preventive effects against colon cancer. Active people have about half the risk of developing the disorder than those less active. Regular physical activity, like a high-fibre diet, reduces the colon cancer risk by speeding waste through the colon. Also, there is a reduction in levels of prostaglandins, insulin, and stress (another suspected risk factor for colon cancer). ❷❸

Women with osteoporosis improve bone health with exercise

A report in the *Journal of Women & Aging* (Oct 2010) followed 58 postmenopausal women, with osteoporosis, who participated in an 11-month study to determine how exercise affects bone health.

After their bone mass and quality was assessed, half the women were placed in an exercise group, while the rest were the non-exercising control group.

Eleven months later, the exercise group significantly improved their bone density and maintained levels of bone quality. The control group significantly decreased on bone quality measures. The exercise group also improved in physical function compared to the control group. ❷❸

Disposing your CFL bulbs . . .

A report in the July 2011 issue of *Personal Health Newsletter*, recommended caution with CFL (compact fluorescent lighting) bulbs. These bulbs contain mercury and need to be disposed of properly. In addition, they are a controversial product, creating other health problems. Read the article again by visiting [Eve Lees Blog](#).

To safely dispose of used CFL bulbs, take them to any Home Depot or Rona Centres across North America. You can also check with any major recycling services in your area. Some Canadian Tire locations will recycle the bulbs, but check first.

Visit Health Canada's website: www.hc-sc.gc.ca for help with safe mercury cleanup. More disposal centres can be found on the Environment Canada website: www.ec.gc.ca or surf the internet for recycling services in your city. ❷❸

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