

Health Connection

WINTER 2006

PREMIERE ISSUE!

BROUGHT TO YOU BY GALESBURG COTTAGE HOSPITAL

Smoke screen
More reasons
to kick the habit

**The fast-track
to lower
cholesterol**

When is the
ER your
best option?



QUALITY CARE. RIGHT HERE.



Nimble body, nimble mind

Question:

To fight memory loss and dementia, it's a good idea to:

- A. do a crossword puzzle
- B. take up a new hobby
- C. exercise regularly
- D. all of the above

If you answered D, you're right. Scientists now know it takes more than mental stimulation to keep your brain sharp well into your later years. Physical activity gives your body and your brain a boost. A half-hour of moderate exercise—walking, golfing, gardening, performing household chores—on most days of the week can help you think more clearly and feel better at any age.

HOW EXERCISE HELPS

Exercise increases blood flow to your brain, promoting brain-cell growth, and helps reduce stress—important since chronic stress causes the release of hormones that can damage your brain over time. Some studies suggest exercise increases levels of important chemicals that maintain brain health. Other studies on mice show that exercise appears to delay or prevent plaque development in brain regions used in memory, thinking and decision making.

Regular exercise also helps preserve healthy brain functioning by:

- **Reducing your risk for heart disease.** Exercise lowers homocysteine, an amino acid in your blood that makes

nerve cells in the brain stop working and die.

- **Controlling your blood sugar.** Diabetes is linked with several types of dementia, including Alzheimer's and vascular dementia (common to stroke survivors). Both aerobic and weight-bearing exercises control your blood sugar by increasing your metabolism.
- **Lowering your blood pressure.** Unchecked, high blood pressure can damage blood vessels in your brain and reduce its oxygen supply, leading to a decline in decision making, memory and verbal skills.
- **Controlling your body weight and improving physical fitness.** Studies show a link between dementia and being overweight, possibly because overweight individuals have more cardiovascular risk factors associated with dementia than people at a healthy weight.

DIVERSITY IS KEY

For the most brain benefits, vary your exercise routine often. It's not how hard you exercise but how many activities you participate in that's key to preventing cognitive decline. Johns Hopkins University found that adults ages 65 and older who were involved in a number of activities (such as walking, biking, swimming, dancing and bowling) experienced less dementia than people who participated in fewer activities. One explanation could be that the variety of activities keeps more parts of the brain active.

So don't worry about how much you're sweating or how vigorously you're moving—just enjoy a variety of activities every day and keep trying new ones.

With good health habits and a little luck, you may never face a sudden medical crisis. But sooner or later, many of us find ourselves involved in one. Suppose it's chest pain, stomach cramps or a nasty kitchen accident—what's the right response? Should you get emergency help or just go see your family doctor?

A true medical emergency is a situation that's life threatening or could cause permanent harm if not treated immediately. Every minute counts. That's the difference between cases needing instant, emergency room intervention and those your doctor can handle in the office.

Doctors say there are no wrong reasons to call for medical assistance in a real emergency, especially if it's heart related. At such a critical time, don't drive yourself to the ER or get someone else to drive you—it could be dangerous. Plus, you need the expertise and equipment that's in an ambulance.

Below are examples of symptoms that constitute a medical emergency. Call for emergency assistance right away if you or a friend experiences any of them. And remember, if you're ever in doubt, play it safe and get help. It could save a life.

SEEK EMERGENCY TREATMENT ...

In cases of trauma:

- uncontrollable bleeding
- wounds with gaping edges



- wounds that involve the face or hands
- wounds caused by a puncture or wounds in which glass, metal or other objects have pierced the body
- severe burns
- head, neck or back injuries
- abdominal injuries or sudden, severe abdominal pain
- problems with movement or feeling after injury
- suspected broken bones
- animal or human bites
- contact with poisonous substances
- sunburn with nausea, vomiting, fever and chills

When the ER is your best option

Medical conditions that require emergency care

Any time these symptoms are present:

- chest discomfort
- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- nausea, dizziness, fainting or profuse sweating, especially when combined with chest pain and breathing difficulty—classic signs of heart attack
- sudden numbness on one side of the face or limbs, confusion, slurred speech, vision loss, severe headache or dizziness—all signs of a possible stroke
- severe allergic reactions from insect bites, food or beverages
- sudden or persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- coughing up or vomiting blood
- fainting, dizziness or hallucinations
- convulsions or seizures
- stiff neck with fever or headache
- sudden severe fever coupled with sensitivity to light
- stupor or dazed behavior
- drug or alcohol overdose
- attempted suicide or suicidal threats or statements

More reasons to stop smoking now

With spring just around the corner, the outdoors will soon beckon. Picture the blooming bulbs. Think of the sounds of newly hatched birds chirping. Imagine taking a blissful walk in the neighborhood as children ride by on their bikes. And then the urge for a cigarette hits you.

Don't ruin all those joys of nature with this habit—put it behind you. Give yourself a chance to take a deep breath without coughing. It's proven that peer support is crucial to kicking the habit once and for all, so grab a friend and make the commitment together.

A HEALTHIER YOU

“There are plenty of reasons to quit, but many people don't realize the immediate benefits of quitting,” says Angelo Soyangco, M.D., a board-certified pulmonologist at Galesburg Cottage Hospital. He outlines the physical effects of quitting:

- **20 minutes after quitting:** Your blood pressure drops to a level close to that before your last cigarette. The temperature of your feet and hands increases to normal.
- **24 hours after quitting:** Your chance of a heart attack decreases.
- **Two weeks to three months after quitting:** Your circulation improves and your lung function increases up to 30 percent.
- **One to nine months after quitting:** Coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue and shortness of breath decrease; cilia (tiny hair-like structures that move mucus out of the lungs) function normally again, cleaning the lungs and reducing the risk of infection.
- **One year after quitting:** Your risk of developing heart disease decreases to half that of a smoker.
- **Five years after quitting:** Your risk of suffering a stroke is reduced to that of a nonsmoker.
- **10 years after quitting:** Your risk of lung cancer drops to as little as one-half that of continuing smokers. Risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidney and pancreas, along with your risk of ulcers, decreases.
- **15 years after quitting:** Your risk of heart disease is that of a nonsmoker's.

BATTLE RESTLESS HANDS

Dr. Soyangco recommends adopting a new hobby to keep hands busy, such as knitting, piano playing or typing at a computer keyboard. Get into the garden and sift through the good earth. Plant some late-blooming bulbs and enjoy the feeling of independence. Of course this won't be easy. Anything worth achieving takes effort.

Learn more!

For more information, contact
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Healthy eating and exercise tips

your dinner plate, dividing it into four sections. One fourth of your plate should be filled with grains or starchy foods like rice, pasta, potatoes, corn or peas. Another fourth should be high-protein foods like lean beef, fish, poultry or tofu. Fill the last half with nonstarchy vegetables like broccoli, carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes, cauliflower or salad. Top it off with a glass

of nonfat milk and a small roll or piece of fruit and you've got a balanced meal.

By Joseph Maslak, M.D., board certified in internal medicine and a fellow of the American College of Physicians

More than 7 percent of the nation's population has been diagnosed with diabetes. Another 6 million have it and don't know it. People with diabetes are at high risk for heart attack and stroke. Their heart attacks tend to be more serious and can happen earlier in life than people without diabetes. In fact, two out of three people with diabetes die from heart disease or stroke.

Fortunately, there's a lot you can do to reduce your risk for heart disease and stroke. Eating healthy is the first step. If you eat healthy at mealtimes, your tendency to make unhealthy choices later in the day will decrease sharply.

BALANCING YOUR PLATE

The trick is to make sure you include foods from the main food groups and keep it in balance. To help you keep this in mind at all meals, try drawing two imaginary lines across

EXERCISE IS ESSENTIAL

While a healthy diet is important, don't forget to exercise. Exercise can prevent the onset of diabetes for those at risk. Initiate an exercise program you can stick to. Make sure you fit in several types of exercises throughout the week and you'll keep your program fresh. Keep your training from becoming monotonous by trying new things. Try to fit some exercises into a social gathering. Ask a friend to join you in walking and change the route often so the scenery doesn't become stagnant. When it's too cold to walk outdoors, walk inside at the mall, join a gym or buy an exercise video you and your friend can work out to.

By being proactive now with diet and exercise, you'll keep yourself healthy and even control the urge to eat unhealthy foods. For more on healthy eating habits, see page 8.



Do you need a doctor?

Joseph Maslak, M.D., of Galesburg Cottage Hospital is board certified in internal medicine and is a fellow of the American College of Physicians. For an appointment, call (309) 342-9183.

HEALTHWISE QUIZ

How much do you know about **asthma**?

Test your knowledge and learn more about asthma.

- 1** Which of the following statements about asthma is *not* true?
- Cockroaches are a major trigger of asthma symptoms.
 - Asthma can develop at any age.
 - Approximately 4,000 Americans die from asthma each year.
 - People with severe asthma should avoid exercise.

- 2** Which of the following is a risk factor for asthma?
- hay fever
 - chronic sinusitis
 - obesity
 - all of the above

- 3** Asthma is the most common chronic childhood disease. According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology, the number of U.S. children estimated to have asthma is:
- 1.5 million
 - 5 million
 - 10 million
 - 20 million

- 4** All of the following are asthma triggers *except*:
- stress
 - home appliances that use natural gas as fuel
 - corticosteroid medications
 - mold

- 5** If someone is having an asthma attack, one of the first things you should do is:
- Take him or her outside for fresh air.
 - Have him or her breathe into a paper bag.
 - Help the sufferer get his or her prescribed asthma drugs and inhaling equipment.
 - Use the sufferer's Epi-Pen to administer an injection of epinephrine.

Conspiracy theory

How 5 risk factors join forces against your health

When it comes to heart disease, you know that risk factors like family history and being overweight don't work in your favor. Now, experts say a combination of five factors—a condition called metabolic syndrome—also conspire against you, adding up to a far greater chance of suffering a heart attack, stroke or diabetes.

You have metabolic syndrome if you have three or more of the following problems:

- **abdominal obesity**—a waist circumference of 40 inches or more for men; 35 inches or more for women
- **high blood pressure**—135/85 mm/Hg or higher
- **high triglyceride levels**—150 mg/dL or more
- **abnormal cholesterol**—HDL cholesterol levels of less than 40 mg/dL for men and 50 mg/dL for women
- **high blood glucose or insulin resistance**—a fasting glucose, or blood sugar, level of 100 mg/dL or higher

Studies show people with metabolic syndrome are twice as likely to suffer a heart attack or stroke than people without these factors.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can head off future trouble if you take these steps now:

- **Lose weight.** Losing as little as 5 percent to 10 percent of your body weight can reduce insulin levels and bring blood pressure down.
- **Eat healthier.** Include more fiber-rich foods like whole grains, beans, fruits and vegetables to aid weight loss and lower insulin levels. Reduce the salt, calories and fat you consume.
- **Exercise.** Get at least 30 minutes of moderately strenuous activity most days of the week.
- **Kick the habit.** Smoking increases insulin resistance and worsens many health problems.
- **Schedule regular checkups.** Get timely checks on your blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels.
- **Consider drug therapy.** Your doctor may prescribe aspirin therapy or medication to control risk factors.



MATCH GAME

Finding the right doctor for you and your family

Different stages of life bring different medical scenarios. Still, one factor remains a constant: the need for a primary care provider who knows you well and can treat you and your family best. So, how should you go about choosing a primary care doctor?

The first step is to put together a list of candidates. Ask friends, family members, co-workers or people you know who work in the medical community. You'll need to find out which doctors are on your health plan.

Once you've chosen a few candidates, call their offices and find out more by asking:

1. Which hospital does the doctor use?
2. What are the practice's office hours?
3. How far in advance do I have to book a routine visit?

4. If I'm sick, will the doctor see me the day I call?
5. Who covers for the doctor when he or she isn't available?
6. How long is the average waiting room time?
7. What is the office policy on appointment cancellations?
8. What do I do if I have an emergency after office hours?
9. Does the doctor give advice over the phone for common problems?
10. How long will I have to wait for a call back from the doctor or a staff member?

Consider your interaction with staff during your phone calls. Were they friendly, efficient and knowledgeable?

Narrow your list to one or two physicians and make an appointment to talk to them. Most likely, you'll have to pay for these visits. As you talk to the doctor, notice whether he or she pays attention to your questions or seems distracted, giving "stock" answers.

Now you should be ready to choose the doctor who can treat you and your family best—and give you peace of mind.

Food for thought

Eating right can help you control diabetes

If you're one of the 16 million Americans who have diabetes, you understand that nutrition should always take center stage. Healthy food choices, along with exercise and medication, are vital to keeping your blood sugar, or glucose, in line and avoiding complications.



hydrate intake, sugary sweets and desserts helps control blood sugar levels. However, you must consume a moderate amount of carbohydrates to supply your body with the valuable energy they provide. But choose quality fuel. Variety among all food groups is key: fresh fruits and vegetables in abundance; beans,

brown rice and whole-grain breads and cereals; lean meat, poultry and fish; and low-fat dairy products.

Drink plenty of water, too, and avoid sweetened drinks. If you drink citrus juice, limit the serving to no more than 6 ounces. If you drink soda, switch to a diet variety.

It's important to stick to proper portion sizes. Learn how to measure and weigh portions. Read food labels, paying particular attention to serving sizes and total carbohydrates. A diabetes educator or dietitian can help you develop an eating plan. By learning to eat properly and controlling your weight and blood sugar levels, you can avoid most diabetes complications.

WHEN YOU EAT

If you have diabetes, you should eat three balanced meals and two snacks a day. Spacing food and trying to eat meals at the same time each day will help control blood sugar and weight. Eating reasonable portions of carbohydrates throughout the day—instead of consuming all your servings at one meal—will keep blood sugar levels stable.

WHAT YOU EAT

Planning what you'll eat at each meal will help you keep blood sugar within a healthy range all day. Limiting carbo-

The fast-track to lower cholesterol

More than 100 million American adults have high cholesterol. You get cholesterol in two ways: Your body makes some of it, and the rest comes from animal products, such as meats, poultry, fish, eggs, butter, cheese and whole milk. Plant foods, like fruits, vegetables and cereals, don't have cholesterol. Some foods that don't contain animal products may contain trans fats, which cause your body to make more cholesterol. Foods with saturated fats also cause the body to make more cholesterol.

Total cholesterol should measure less than 200 (the number refers to milligrams per deciliter of blood). A score ranging from 200 to 239—borderline high—means you may be at increased risk for heart disease and stroke. If your total cholesterol is 240 or above, you're at increased risk.

To lower your cholesterol, try using these tips:

- Consume less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol each day. Avoid foods high in dietary fat to meet this goal.
- Watch your caloric intake by eating a wide variety of foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol.
- Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Eat six or more servings of cereals, breads, pasta and other whole-grain products each day.



- Eat fish, poultry without skin and leaner cuts of meat instead of fatty ones.
- Consume fat-free or 1 percent dairy products rather than whole-milk varieties.
- Exercise vigorously for 30 to 60 minutes most days of the week if not every day.
- Quit smoking.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Take prescribed medication if diet and exercise isn't enough to lower cholesterol.

These steps can help you lower your blood cholesterol. As a rule, remember to eat more foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol and fewer high-fat ones, especially those high in saturated fats. For more information about cholesterol, talk to your physician.

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