

SPECIAL
Inside This Issue
**2008 Annual
Report**

Helping you make ● the most of your healthcare

choices

**GO
GREEN
FOR GOOD
HEALTH**

(and save \$\$\$!)

**7 Reasons
to Start Running**
A Chef's Lasagna
Makeover

**4 Hidden
Home Hazards**



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SPRING 2009

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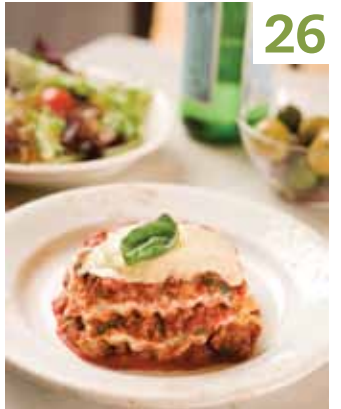
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Gerald Goldstein
Cranston, Rhode Island





To many of us, going green can seem like a luxury. Organic produce, nontoxic cleaners, natural lawn care products—they all seem to cost more than conventional versions. We may want to go green for our health and the earth, but we don't think we can afford it.

But the truth is that going green can actually help save green. Our feature article on page 10 explains how you can save hundreds of dollars while also improving your health and helping the environment.

Our 21 tips will help you exercise more, eat better, lower stress, waste less, reduce pollution, and more.

In the feature article, we suggest growing your own organic fruits, vegetables, and herbs. You can put the herbs to good use in the delicious lasagna recipe on page 26. We asked Chef Bill Idell from Johnson & Wales University to make over a traditional high-fat lasagna recipe. He cut the fat in half and used fresh herbs to replace fat with flavor. I was lucky enough to sample both recipes, and the made-over version tasted even better than the original.

From all of us at BCBSRI, have a happy and healthy spring!

Julie O'Connell
Julie O'Connell
Editor

And the Survey Says...

What readers think of Choices

Last fall, we surveyed 500 BCBSRI members to see what they thought of *Choices*. We were pleased to find out that, overall, survey participants were very satisfied with the magazine. We'd like to thank everyone who participated and share some of the results, which will help us make decisions about the content and layout of future issues. If you have any suggestions/comments about the magazine, we'd love to know. Just e-mail choices@bcbstri.org.

24 minutes

Average time *Choices* readers spend with the magazine

22%

Pass the magazine to someone in their household

88%

Feel the length of the articles is about right

79%

Agree that *Choices* has useful health and wellness information

What members do as a result of reading the magazine

- 37% took action on their health
- 30% cut or saved an article
- 26% took advantage of BCBSRI programs or resources

Most popular topics

- Food: 80%
- Medical advice column: 75%
- Fitness: 68%
- Prescription and over-the-counter drugs: 63%
- Healthcare issues: 53%
- Behavioral health: 43%

choices

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Victoria Lemle Beckner, Ph.D.

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As a clinical psychologist, Dr. Beckner specializes in the treatment of anxiety disorders, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She also serves as Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California at San Francisco and is Past President of the San Francisco Psychological Association. Her book with coauthor, John Arden, Ph.D., *Conquering Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*, offers practical strategies for coping with trauma.



Q: Could you explain what PTSD is?

A: PTSD develops when a traumatic event causes a cascade of physical and psychological changes and symptoms in the body. These changes disrupt proper storage of the experience in memory and cause the person's stress alarm system to stay on active alert. So the brain continues to think the person is in danger, and he or she continues to have a lot of the physiological and psychological symptoms of anxiety.

Q: What are common symptoms in people with PTSD?

A: The surprising thing is that the symptoms are very consistent across all types of trauma, with maybe the exception of childhood sexual or physical abuse. For most traumas, symptoms include nightmares, intrusive images and thoughts, irritability, avoiding situations that trigger anxiety. They also experience emotional numbing, which is probably the brain's way of coping with all the intense negative emotions.

Q: What can you tell us about the causes of PTSD in the United States?

A: Between 5 and 12 percent of the population at some time will develop PTSD. It's higher for women than it is for

men, even though men have a slightly higher rate of exposure to trauma. Traumas include war, rape, assault, serious car accidents, childhood abuse, disasters, and even medical emergencies. A quarter of our troops are returning from the Iraq and Afghan wars with some psychological disorder, and the majority of those are PTSD.

Q: What's the most effective treatment?

A: Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) helps individuals work through the trauma memory and use exposure techniques to reduce anxiety and avoidance. It's a form of psychotherapy, but much more structured and active. Part of what you're doing is having the individual tell the trauma story in a very careful, controlled way repeatedly so that the anxiety associated with the memory goes down over time through exposure. It also helps organize the memory in their brain and helps people work through some of the painful thoughts and beliefs associated with the traumatic event. You also have them go out and start confronting some of the situations they are avoiding. Again, you do this in a very systematic, controlled way. Medications for PTSD like antidepressants can be very helpful, and the

combination with psychotherapy can also be very effective.

Q: Is there any way to prevent PTSD?

A: I think that there's a lot people can do within hours or days immediately after a trauma. People who've experienced trauma should engage in active, rather than passive, coping mechanisms. Active coping would be talking about the experience, getting active in putting your life together after a disaster, or helping someone else who had been involved in the same traumatic event. Don't numb yourself out with alcohol, television, or that kind of thing. They should also know what anxiety symptoms are and what to expect immediately after a trauma. That way, they're less likely to have a fear reaction to their stress reaction.

Q: How can family members be supportive?

A: They should learn about the disorder so they can understand what's happening. For example, irritability and anger are common symptoms of PTSD. Just knowing that can ease some of the tension. The other big thing is to really listen to the person's fears and concerns without trying to take away the pain or problem. For example, soldiers return to civilian life after life and death confrontations and often feel that everything on the home front is trivial— "How can you care about what's on TV, shopping, or buying a nice car?" Their sense of meaning has changed, and often they feel that people in their lives don't understand. Empathetic listening is very powerful medicine.

PTSD Resources

The Veterans Administration
Hospital
nvf.org

The National Center for PTSD
ncptsd.va.gov

The International Society for
Traumatic Stress Studies
istss.org

Association for Advanced
Behavior Therapy
aabt.org

4 Rules of Gym Etiquette

If you frequent the gym, you probably know some of the fellow members only by their (bad) behavior. The person who slams the weights. Who wears heavy perfume. Who chats on a cell phone while cycling. These people are probably unfamiliar with gym etiquette:

1. Keep it clean.

After each use, wipe down cardio and weight machines with the cleaners that your gym provides. Also, don't leave free weights on the floor or leave weight plates on machines. Put everything back for the next person.

2. Keep it down.

Even if cell phones aren't officially banned at your gym, stay off the phone. If you chat with a gym buddy, avoid standing or sitting on equipment that others may be waiting for. Also, avoid slamming down weights—it's not good form or pleasant to others.

3. Keep it fragrance free.

Some people are allergic to perfumes and colognes, and others find the smells distracting when they're already breathing hard.

4. Keep it friendly.

If you are doing a certain number of sets on a machine, let others use it while you're resting. And if you want to use equipment that someone is clearly planning to use again, just ask first.



Nuts for Good Health

Recent studies have linked eating nuts to weight loss, reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, and lower cholesterol levels. Nuts are high in unsaturated (good) fats, so they're a delicious and satisfying snack. Below are some of the best nuts for your health—just be sure to eat them unsalted and in moderation!



	PISTACHIO	PEANUT*	ALMOND	WALNUT
Nuts in a serving (1 oz.)	49	28	24	14 halves
Fat	13 g	14 g	14 g	18 g
What's in them	Potassium, vitamin B6, magnesium	Folate, iron, niacin, magnesium	Calcium, iron, fiber, vitamin E, magnesium	Omega-3 fatty acids, copper, magnesium

*A peanut is technically a legume, but is often grouped with nuts.

The Great(est) Outdoors

Grand Canyon National Park

Trying to plan a lower cost vacation? Consider visiting one of our national parks. In addition to their breathtaking scenery, these national treasures offer hiking, biking, swimming, and camping. Here are the 10 most visited parks.

1. **Great Smoky Mountains** (Tennessee, North Carolina)
2. **Grand Canyon** (Arizona)
3. **Yosemite** (California)
4. **Yellowstone** (Wyoming, Montana, Idaho)
5. **Olympic** (Washington)
6. **Rocky Mountain** (Colorado)
7. **Zion** (Utah)
8. **Grand Teton** (Wyoming)
9. **Cuyahoga Valley** (Ohio)
10. **Acadia** (Maine)

Double Your Weight Loss

It might be time to start keeping a diary. In a study done by the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research, people who kept food diaries lost twice as much weight as those who kept no records. And they kept the weight off.

One reason that food diaries work so well is that most of us underestimate how many calories we take in each day. A well-kept food diary takes into account everything a person eats and drinks, no matter how small (even the ketchup on that hamburger!).

You can keep a food diary online with free sites such as fitday.com, which make it easy to look up the calorie and nutritional content of specific foods. Or you can download a sample print version of a food diary at the National, Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at nhlbi.nih.gov. Both sites also provide tools and information on tracking physical activity.



MYTH? or FACT?

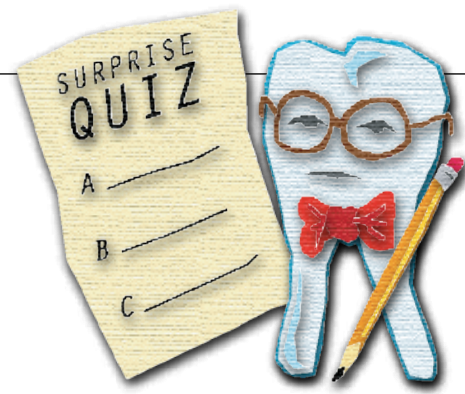
Reading in dim light can harm your eyesight.



Myth! Reading in dim light may temporarily strain your eyes, but it will not lead to permanent damage.

A Dental Exam

Do you know the difference between a bridge and a root canal? Or why your teeth hurt when you eat ice cream? Put your mind where your mouth is and test your knowledge.



Match the dental term to its definition.

1. Sealant
2. Root canal
3. Bridge
4. Implant
5. Scaling
6. Crown

- a. Non-removable prosthesis used to replace missing teeth
- b. Tooth pulp is removed, and insides of tooth canals are cleaned, filled, and sealed
- c. Thin, plastic coatings placed on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth
- d. Removes plaque and stains from teeth
- e. Used to support cracked or decayed tooth
- f. Tooth replacement surgically attached to jawbone



Choose one answer for each question.

7. What percentage of U.S. adults have cavities?

- a. 56
- b. 74
- c. 85
- d. 92
- e. 99



8. What can make teeth sensitive to food and cold?

- a. Worn tooth enamel
- b. Gum disease
- c. Cracks in tooth
- d. Worn fillings
- e. All of the above



9. If your tooth is knocked out, what should you do first?

- a. Soak it in milk.
- b. Gently rinse it off and try to reinsert in the socket.
- c. Scrub it and remove any attached tissue.
- d. Clean it with hydrogen peroxide.
- e. Drink a glass of orange juice.

1. **c.** Sealants help prevent plaque from getting into the grooves on the biting surfaces of the teeth. Sealants help prevent tooth decay and possibly the need for more extensive dental work such as fillings and crowns. It's recommended that children get sealants on their permanent molars as soon as they come in.

2. **b.** A root canal may be needed due to a cracked tooth, deep cavity, or facial injury. This procedure saves about 17 million teeth each year and helps you keep your natural teeth.

3. **a.** A bridge is a prosthesis that is held in place by two crowns acting as anchors on each side. The bridge is cemented in place. A bridge can help prevent teeth from moving and help you chew normally.

4. **f.** Implants are used to replace missing teeth or support dentures.

5. **d.** Scaling removes plaque and tartar that collect around and under the gum line and cause the gums to become inflamed. This condition, called gingivitis, can progress to periodontitis (advanced gum disease). It can be prevented with good oral hygiene and regular dental visits.

6. **e.** Crowns cover the whole tooth and are made of porcelain or porcelain with metal. They are used when a tooth is cracked or when there is not enough natural tooth structure to support a filling.

7. **d.** 92 percent. Cavities can occur in adults as well as children. Because gums can recede as we age, older adults are more likely to have cavities at the gum line. Also, people who are on a lot of medication tend to develop dry mouth, which can make them more prone to cavities.

8. **e.** All of these can make teeth sensitive. Talk to your dentist about treatment options, including desensitizing toothpaste, fluoride gel, a filling, or a crown.

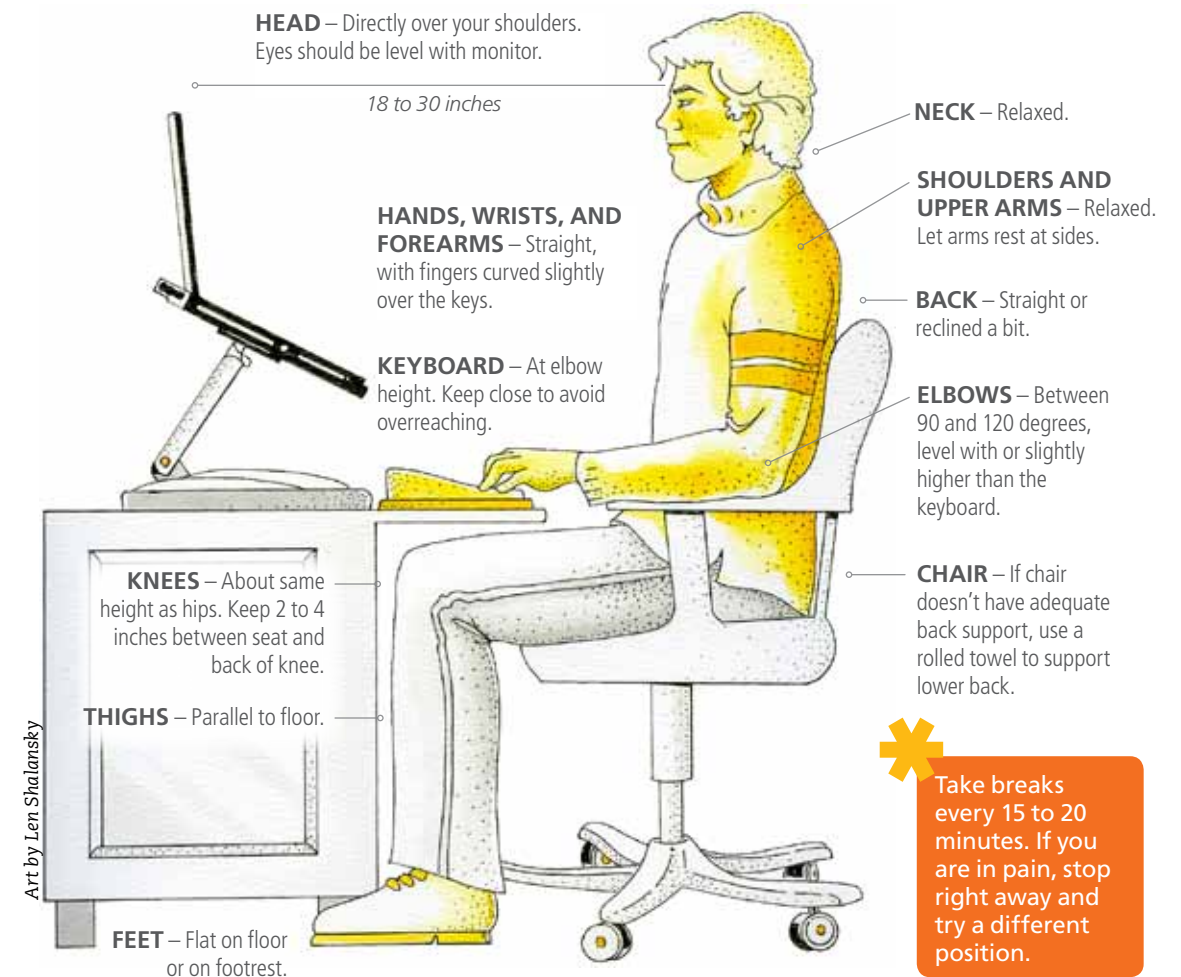
9. **b.** Gently rinse it off and try to reinsert in the socket. The American Dental Association recommends that you gently rinse off the root with water if it's dirty. (Be sure to hold the tooth by the tooth part, not the root.) Don't remove any tissue fragments or scrub the tooth. If you can, the ADA recommends reinserting the tooth in its socket. If you can't, put the tooth in milk. In any case, get to the dentist immediately for the best chance to keep the tooth.

How to Avoid a Laptop Injury

Last year was the first that laptop computers outsold desktops. And that might be bad for our necks, backs, wrists, and elbows. The feature that makes laptops so appealing—having the monitor and keyboard connected—causes strain on our bodies. Doctors are now even seeing teenagers with serious repetitive use injuries, which can damage muscles, nerves, tendons, and ligaments. The tips below can help you prevent laptop-related pain.

SET UP YOUR LAPTOP LIKE A DESKTOP

The best option is to put your laptop in a docking station with a separate monitor and keyboard, but that isn't possible for everyone. The second best option (pictured at right) is to use your laptop as a monitor and plug in a regular keyboard and mouse. A laptop stand can raise the monitor so you don't have to bend your neck to see it.



Take breaks every 15 to 20 minutes. If you are in pain, stop right away and try a different position.

If you aren't near a table

Place a binder or books under the laptop to prop it up (or use a laptop stand), and keep your body aligned as described above. You won't be able to have your monitor at eye level, but angle your screen to put the least stress on your neck. Tuck in your chin to look down, rather than bending your neck and back. If your chair doesn't have arms, use pillows under your arms while typing.



If you're in class

Follow the instructions for *If you aren't near a table*, but use the binder or books to prop up the laptop on a desk rather than your lap. Also, if your chair doesn't have arms, just try to keep your forearms, wrists, and hands parallel to the floor.





Hand-me-down Health

Trying to put together a family medical history? Find out what—and who—to ask.

by Bill O'Connell

The genetic gifts that are handed down from one generation to another are often easy to see. “He looks just like his father.” “She gets her artistic flair from her aunt.” “That family is filled with great athletes.”

Not as evident, however, are the genetic threads that can intertwine with shared habits, lifestyles, and living conditions to pass diseases between family members. That’s why doctors are so interested in your family’s medical history.

Learn from (family) history

The more information your doctor has about you and your family, the better able he or she will be to help you live a healthy life. *What type of cancer did your grandfather have? When did your uncle begin having trouble with his heart? Have any close relatives had diabetes?* The answers to questions like these can help your doctor assess your chances of getting a disease. Depending on what diseases run in your family, your doctor may order tests and screenings that can identify a condition early. He or she may also make recommendations for lifestyle changes that can help reduce your chances of getting a particular disease.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the key features of a family history that may increase risk are:

- Diseases that occur at an earlier age than expected (10 to 20 years before most people get the disease)
- Disease in more than one close relative

- Disease that does not usually affect a certain gender (for example, breast cancer in a male)
- Certain combinations of diseases within a family (for example, breast and ovarian cancer, or heart disease and diabetes)

The seeds of knowledge

If you’re like most people, you understand the importance of gathering your family history. According to a 2004 survey, 96 percent of Americans believe that knowing their family history is important to their health. Unfortunately, only 33 percent of those surveyed have ever tried to document that history.

By acting as your family’s health historian, you can perform a valuable service that may help save your life—or the life of a loved one. The U.S. Surgeon General suggests that you collect information about your parents, siblings, and children, as well as your grandparents, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, and cousins. The type of information to collect includes:

- Major medical conditions and causes of death
- Age when a family member got a disease and age at death
- Ethnic background
- General lifestyle information like heavy drinking and smoking

Pulling it all together

To simplify the process, the Surgeon General created a tool called “My Family Health Portrait,” which can be accessed at hhs.gov/familyhistory. You can use the tool online, or print out a paper version. Even if you decide to enter and save your information electronically, the paper version is a helpful guide to use when gathering information from your relatives.

When you’re ready to start, you may want to let your family members know what you’re doing so they can be prepared. Holidays and family events when several family members are present are always good times to collect information. Be ready for some resistance, though. Not everyone likes to speak about their medical issues, particularly if they are embarrassed by them.

To help ease concerns among family members, explain how a detailed medical history may be able to help the people they care about. Also, offer to share your findings with them so they can use the information as well. Don’t get frustrated, however, if you can’t create a complete medical family tree. Even if your aunt doesn’t want to talk about each aspect of her medical history, she may have valuable information about other relatives that can fill in gaps. Every piece of information you can uncover may help a doctor make the right decision about your health or the health of a family member. ■

By acting as your family’s health historian, you can perform a valuable service that may help save your life—or the life of a loved one.

G GREEN FOR GOOD HEALTH

With these 21 tips, you'll improve your health, help the earth, and save hundreds of dollars a year!

by Julie O'Connell

It's the simple truth—protecting the environment helps protect your health. By going green with our 21 tips, you'll help reduce pollution, waste less, and preserve natural resources...and you'll exercise more, eat better, lower your stress, protect your heart and lungs, and reduce your exposure to pesticides, chemicals, and other toxins. Plus, you'll save green along the way!

WHEN EATING AND DRINKING



1 Eat local. Food grown locally is sold soon after harvest, so it tastes better and contains more nutrients than food that takes longer to get to your plate. Local food also usually contains fewer preservatives and pesticides, which are used partly to maintain freshness and appearance.

Save \$\$\$

Buying local helps you eat native, seasonal foods, which are usually less expensive than exotic foods.

2 Eat less meat. The saturated fat in meat can increase your risk for heart disease and diabetes. And according to the United Nations, the production of meat is responsible for almost a fifth of global greenhouse gas emissions. If you can't go without meat, try eating smaller servings.

Save \$\$\$

Meat is often the priciest part of a meal. Lower the cost of dinners by focusing on beans, whole grains, and/or vegetables.

3 Go organic when you can. If organic foods were the same price as conventional foods, more people would buy organic. A good compromise is to find out which conventional produce has the most pesticides and buy those organic. The Environmental Working Group ranked produce by the amount of pesticides typically found in them. Peaches, apples, and sweet bell peppers topped the list—find the full list at foodnews.org.



Save \$\$\$

To find organic foods at lower costs, contact your city/town to see if there is an organic community garden or food co-op near you, or search on localharvest.org.

4 Pack your lunch. Oversized lunch portions can add extra calories and fat to your diet. Plus, all those disposable containers, utensils, and bags create a lot of waste. Try making extra for dinner, then bringing leftovers in a reusable lunch bag (with reusable containers, of course).



Save \$\$\$

Lunch at a restaurant can cost upwards of \$10 per day—that's \$2,600 a year!

5 Make your own baby food.

Organic jarred baby food is one option for parents concerned about pesticides. But you can also make your own using organic ingredients and a food grinder. The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers a guide to getting started: www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resources/feedinginfants-ch12.pdf. Talk to your child's doctor to ensure your baby is getting all the necessary nutrients.

Save \$\$\$

Parents spend an average of \$300 or more on baby food in the first year. Making your own baby food could be half or even a quarter of the cost.

6 Choose tap over bottled.

This year, Americans will drink more than 30 billion bottles of water, and the majority will not be recycled. Bottled water isn't better for your health than tap water (often bottled water is filtered tap water), and bottled water is actually subject to fewer regulations than tap.

Save \$\$\$

While a gallon of filtered tap water is less than 20 cents, individual-sized bottled water can run to \$12 per gallon.

7 Wash hands to reduce exposure to chemicals.

Try using regular soap and water rather than antibacterial soap. Antibacterials aren't any more effective than regular soap, and their safety is under review—researchers at the University of California, Davis found that chemicals in these soaps have the potential to affect sex hormones and interfere with the nervous system.

Save \$\$\$

Antibacterial soaps often cost slightly more than regular soaps.

WHEN CLEANING



8 Go back to basics. A recent study in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* found that using household cleaning sprays and air fresheners as little as once a week can raise your asthma risk. However, you can avoid chemicals altogether by using common household products to clean. Use baking soda and water to clean appliances and pans, and vinegar to clean tubs and windows. You can even combine vinegar and baking soda to unclog drains. Learn how to make quick and easy green cleaners by visiting these two sites:

- epa.gov/gmpo/edresources/chem_h.html
- thegreenguide.com/home-garden/cleaning/diy-cleaners

Save \$\$\$

A 32 oz. glass cleaner costs around \$5, while a 32 oz. bottle of distilled white vinegar is \$2. Baking soda is less than \$1.

9 Dry clean less. Perchloroethylene (perc), the chemical used by most dry cleaners, causes air pollution and has been listed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a probable cancer-causing agent. Many items listed as "dry-clean only" can be washed by hand or in the delicate cycle in cold water. For clothes that cannot be washed—such as wool, silk, and suits—call your local dry cleaning association and ask for names of cleaners who use CO₂ dry cleaning or professional wet cleaning.

\$\$\$ saved

You'll save \$3-\$10 per clothing item you wash at home.

10 Recycle hazardous materials. The air inside homes is about two to five times more polluted than the air outside, according to the EPA. That pollution is partly due to household cleaners and pesticides. In addition to using non-toxic alternatives, you should also recycle any hazardous products in your home now, including pesticides, oil-based paints, and motor oil. To find local places to recycle different products, visit earth911.com.



Save \$\$\$

If you must use hazardous products, use the smallest amount possible, or find out if someone else has an open container of what you need.



Many dry-clean-only clothes can be washed in the delicate cycle.

11 Use less electricity. Generating electricity is one of the biggest sources of pollution in the United States, particularly the eastern United States, according to the American Lung Association (ALA). The ALA also reports that 42 percent of Americans live in counties that have unhealthy levels of either ozone or particle pollution. So turn off the lights if you leave the room for even a minute.



Save \$\$\$ Compact fluorescent light bulbs might cost more up front, but their long life will save money in the long run. Just be sure to recycle, as they contain small amounts of mercury.

WHEN BUYING AND SELLING



12 Use low- or no-VOC paint. Much of the pollution inside houses comes from paints and finishes. Many paints contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which can cause headaches, loss of coordination, nausea, and affect the central nervous system, according to the EPA. Not much is known about the health effects that occur from the levels of VOCs usually found in homes, but after painting indoors with traditional paints, the levels of VOC can be 1,000 times that of the air outside.

Save \$\$\$ Low- and no-VOC paints now work as well as traditional paints and generally don't cost much more.



Should we be worried about the chemicals in our homes?

Kurt Teichert, Lecturer and Manager of the Environmental Stewardship Initiatives at Brown University, says, "It's difficult to know the effect that a combination of pollutants can have on an individual, or what effects pollutants have on children or smaller adults."

To reduce your exposure, use non-toxic cleaners and other products whenever possible. Teichert suggests having a welcome mat, which can cut down on contaminants in the home. If you wipe your shoes on the outside mat, or take

off your shoes, you track in less pollutants from outside the home.

Also, if you buy products that have a lot of volatile organic compounds, such as shower curtains, carpets, or rubber mats, Teichert recommends leaving them outdoors to air out before using them indoors. (See tip 12 for more on VOCs.) This will help release some of the gases that could pollute your home. There are also some natural-fiber alternatives that you can purchase instead of high-VOC products.

13 Buy used. Whether you shop secondhand stores, garage sales, or sites like craigslist.com, buying used saves money and prevents good, usable items from being tossed. It also cuts down on the amount of packaging and materials needed to create new products. Plus, a good find lifts your mood.

Save \$\$\$ The possibilities are endless. And to not spend any money at all, try bartering for goods and/or services.

14 Donate or sell your stuff. This has the same benefits as buying used, except you make money instead of spending it.

Save \$\$\$ Have a neighborhood garage sale, and share the promotion costs. Or, if you're donating items, ask for a receipt so you can use it as a tax deduction.



WHEN GETTING AROUND



15 Walk or bike instead of driving. Half of all car trips are less than three miles, and cars produce 40 percent more emissions when first started. So try biking or walking to your destination, whether it's to the pharmacy or your job.

Save \$\$\$ If your trip to work is 10 miles each way, you'll save a gallon of gas each day by biking. You'll also save on wear and tear on your car and parking costs. Learn more about biking to work—and bike safety—at bicyclinginfo.org.



16 Be a responsible driver. Taking care of your vehicle, driving slower, and not riding your brake protects you and others on the road while improving your fuel economy. And since a well-maintained car lasts longer, you avoid the need for a new car (and all the materials that requires) and new car payments.

Save \$\$\$ According to fueleconomy.gov, each five miles per hour (mph) you drive over 60 mph is like paying an additional \$0.24 per gallon for gas. (And that's assuming a cost of only \$1.89/gallon!)

17 Use public transit. The EPA reports that more than half of toxic air pollutant emissions in the United States are caused by motor vehicles. You can cut down on air pollution, reduce your stress, and read a good book all on your way to work. Visit publictransportation.org to find your local public transit information. If public transportation isn't available in your area, try carpooling.

Save \$\$\$ According to the American Public Transportation Association, you can save an average of \$8,416 annually by taking public transportation instead of driving, based on December 2008 gas prices and the average unreserved parking rate.

WHEN LANDSCAPING



18 Grow your own food. Rising food prices are leading many to grow their own fruits, vegetables, and herbs. The easiest items to grow are beets, tomatoes, onions, spinach, snap peas, carrots, and squash. Visit cdcg.org for tips on organic gardening. To find a local community garden, visit communitygarden.org.

Save \$\$\$ Grow plants from seed and use your own compost (see tip 19) to fertilize your garden.

19 Try composting. You can reduce up to two-thirds of your household waste by composting. Use food scraps, yard trimmings, and organic waste to create a compost pile (it doesn't smell, really), which yields a rich soil amendment. To learn how to compost, including what to—and what not to—compost, please visit epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/rrr/composting.

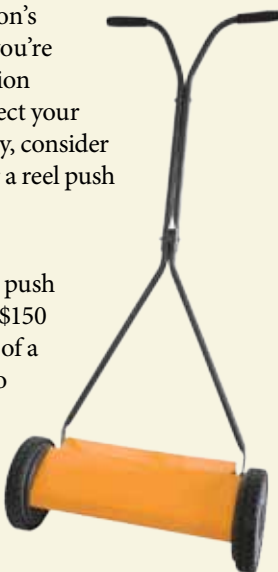
Save \$\$\$ Compost is a natural fertilizer, so you don't have to buy chemical or organic fertilizers for your lawn or garden.

20 Use natural pest repellants. Pesticides are very dangerous chemicals, and some approved for residential use even include 2,4-D, a component of Agent Orange. Avoid the use of pesticides completely by using non-toxic, natural deterrents. The EPA suggests using ladybugs to eat aphids, planting marigolds to ward off beetles, and looking for quick-sprouting plants to block weed growth. For information on non-chemical methods, please visit cdcg.org.

Save \$\$\$ Many of the natural methods used to control pests don't cost anything or cost much less than pesticides.

21 Retire your gas mower. Traditional gas-powered lawn mowers are responsible for 5 percent of the nation's air pollution. And you're inhaling that pollution as you mow. To protect your health and air quality, consider an electric mower or a reel push mower.

Save \$\$\$ The average cost of a push reel mower is \$90 to \$150 and the average cost of a gas mower is \$200 to \$400. Plus, you don't have to pay for gas.



4 HIDDEN HOME HAZARDS

Are these substances affecting your family's health?

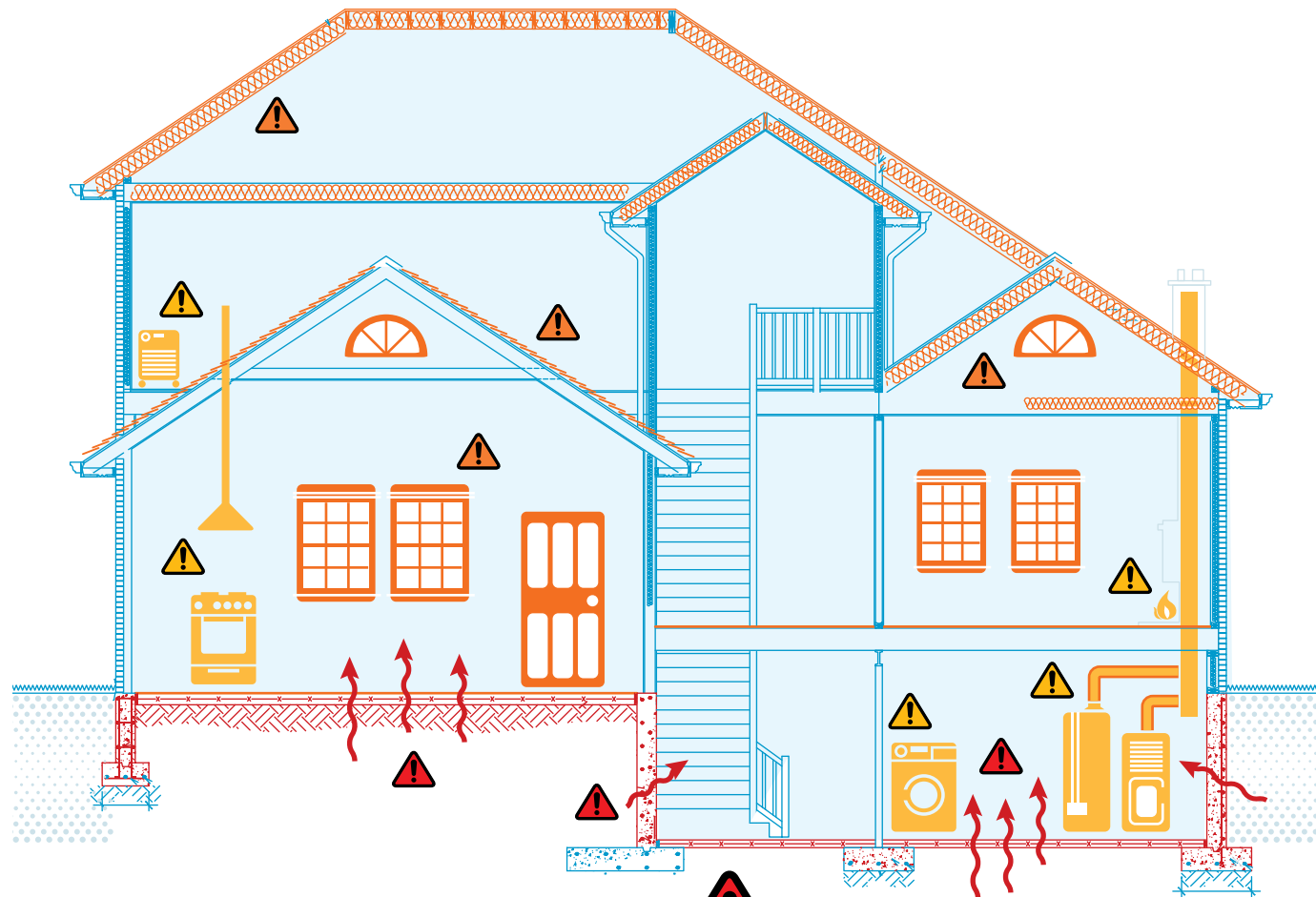
by Joseph Rotella

Home is where we usually feel safest, but our homes may contain substances that are harmful to our health. And we may not be able to see, smell, or taste many of them without testing or a professional's help.

So how do you know what to ask about the environment you're living in? "It should all start with a thorough home inspection and knowing the history of your home," says Stephen Gladstone, President of Stonehollow, Inc., a professional home inspection company in Stamford, Connecticut, and a past President of the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI).

"If you're buying a home, you should ask about things like presence of buried fuel tanks, history and results of insect treatments, history of previous homeowners' illnesses, and whether or not radon, lead, or water tests have been performed and if any problems were indicated, among other things," he continues.

With that in mind, here is information about four of the most common hazards that may be affecting your home (and your health).



RADON

Radon is an invisible, tasteless, and odorless natural radioactive gas that is caused by the breakdown of uranium in the bedrock underground. It works its way up through the soil and into your home. It is present in many homes throughout the United States, whether new or old, and if there is a basement or not. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that one out of every 15 homes in the United States has elevated radon levels.

How it can be harmful: Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers, responsible for roughly 20,000 deaths per year in the United

States. Exposure to high levels can also lead to other lung diseases, such as emphysema.

What you can do: Testing is the only detection method for radon. If you're buying a home, your home inspector will probably recommend that you also have a professional radon test done. If you want to test yourself, you can find an inexpensive radon testing kit at most home improvement stores. If testing finds higher than recommended radon levels, you should contact your state's radon office (you can find this information at epa.gov) to find a qualified mitigation contractor. These professionals can perform a series of techniques to reduce the levels.

CARBON MONOXIDE

Carbon monoxide (CO) is another odorless and invisible gas that can be deadly if you're exposed to high levels of it. It is the resulting gas when fuel is burned—examples include heating oil, gas (natural or gasoline), wood, kerosene, or charcoal. CO caused by malfunctioning fuel-burning appliances kills hundreds of people each year.

How it can be harmful: At high levels, breathing in CO can kill you within minutes. Lesser levels can cause shortness of breath, dizziness, mild to severe headaches, confusion, nausea, and fainting. Since these symptoms can be similar to those of the flu

or food poisoning, it is critical that you try to get some fresh air and seek medical attention immediately if you or family members experience them.

What you can do: Have fuel-burning appliances—such as furnaces (oil or gas), water heaters, gas ranges and ovens, wood stoves, fireplaces, and chimneys—inspected by a professional each year, ideally before the winter months. This will ensure proper ventilation and can keep CO from building in your home. It is also important to have a working CO detector, but do not rely on it as your sole means of protection. You can also find CO testing devices at most home improvement stores.

LEAD & ASBESTOS



Lead and asbestos are more prevalent in older homes. Lead was often used in paint to add durability, resist moisture, and speed drying, and is found in many homes that were built before 1978. It was banned by the government in 1978, and many states stopped using it before that. Asbestos is a fibrous, heat-resistant mineral that was used for many years to make building materials such as insulation, ceiling and floor tiles, coatings, and shingles.

How they can be harmful: Long-term, high level exposure to lead can be harmful to adults, causing high blood pressure, nerve disorders, reproductive problems, and muscle and joint pain. But it is more dangerous to children because their growing bodies absorb more lead, and can potentially cause damage to the brain and nervous system. Asbestos typically doesn't have immediate symptoms, but there are long-term risks of chest and abdominal cancers, as well as lung diseases, in those who have been exposed to it or have breathed it in for many years.

What you can do: If your home was built before 1978, have it tested for lead, and repair any hazards. You should also have your children tested for lead, just to be safe, even if your house is newer. Higher risk children under age six should be tested annually. Each state has different recommendations and guidelines—find more about this at epa.gov or by contacting your state public health department and by talking with your child's doctor. Lead doesn't just come from older houses, so most children should be screened at least once, usually between 9 and 15 months of age.

However, it's important to know that even if your home has lead-based paint, if it is in good condition (e.g., not chipping) or causing dust (e.g., through opening and closing windows and doors), it will not pose a threat unless it is tampered with. "Lead paint does not jump off the walls and make you sick," says Gladstone. "You can make the situation much worse if you attempt to remove it yourself in an unsafe manner." The same goes for asbestos removal—it is best to leave undamaged materials untouched to avoid complications. Always consult a professional before attempting to remove anything you are unsure of.

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H4152 2009_57 8/2008

The Doctor's In



**By Peter
Hollmann, M.D.**

Associate Chief Medical Officer,
Blue Cross & Blue Shield
of Rhode Island

Dear Dr. Hollmann,
My husband and I have been trying to conceive for about six months with no luck. I'd heard that you should try for a year before seeing a doctor, but should I go sooner since we are a bit older? I'm 36 and my husband is 40.

It would be a good idea for you to talk to your doctor now, just to get expert personal advice. Infertility is defined as an inability to conceive after 12 months of regular intercourse without contraception. There is general agreement that failure to conceive by 12 months warrants evaluation. However, that doesn't mean one should wait 12 months before seeking medical advice. Many doctors advocate six months as an appropriate time for evaluation, and most would suggest this earlier evaluation in people your age.

The definition of infertility is based on studies showing that the rate of conception per attempted pregnancy per menstrual cycle drops off slowly—the longer you try only helps up to a point. The result is that about 72 percent of fertile couples will experience a pregnancy by six months. The number only rises to 85 percent by 12 months. While additional time can result in some small number of additional pregnancies, the plateau has been effectively reached by 12 months.

For women planning pregnancy, 35 is a number usually regarded as “older” (though to me you're still a kid). A woman aged 19 to 26 has a 50 percent chance of pregnancy with **one** try when intercourse occurs on the most fertile day of the cycle. In a woman aged 35, that number is down to 30 percent, and if the male partner is five years older, the rate drops to 15 percent. While most couples

would not measure success by (or limit themselves to) one attempt, the risk of an inability to conceive at all without assisted reproductive technologies increases with age.

More importantly, **every** woman should get preconception counseling. So if you haven't already gone over the facts of pregnancy planning and preparation with your doctor, now is the time. This is especially important for women aged 35 and older, as the rate of genetic disorders in the fetus climbs steeply with age, though thankfully remains the exception. Complications for the mother are also more common with older age.

For more information, including excellent patient education pamphlets, please visit the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists at acog.org.

Dear Dr. Hollmann,
I've seen a lot of foods that include probiotics, which are supposed to be good for the stomach. Do these really work? Should I try to choose cereals, yogurts, and other foods that include probiotics?

Probiotics are bacteria or yeasts that are beneficial to the person in whom they live. There are several types, including lactic acid bacteria (e.g., *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium*), a strain of *E. coli* that does not cause disease, and a yeast (*Saccharomyces boulardii*).

The interest, both commercially and medically, in probiotics is probably a little ahead of the scientific proof. However, they truly do seem useful in the treatment of some digestive diseases, such as ulcerative colitis and acute infectious diarrhea, or in preventing antibiotic-associated diarrhea (which occurs in people who

are taking, or have recently taken, antibiotics). The common chronic malady of irritable bowel syndrome has not had convincing evidence of being helped by probiotics. But these microorganisms are generally safe, so some may consider them worth trying for various intestinal conditions even if unproven. There is also some interest in probiotics use for allergies, but there is no evidence that we all should be consuming these little pals for general health purposes.

Probiotics are not approved by the Food and Drug Administration, which can be problematic for doctors, as it's impossible to order a standardized preparation like one can for a drug. And as they are not medications, they are usually not covered by insurance. But you have to love a treatment that you can take in the billions. To reduce the symptoms of infectious diarrhea, the minimal effective dose of *lactobacillus* appears to be 10 billion colony-forming units given within the first 48 hours. So when it comes to intestinal bacteria, you too can be a billionaire. ■

Got a question? E-mail your health question to choices@bcbsri.org, or mail it to:

While Dr. Hollmann cannot respond to letters personally, he'll answer as many as possible in the next issue.

The information provided through this column is intended solely for general information and should not be relied upon for any particular diagnosis, treatment, or care. Always consult with your doctor for appropriate examinations, treatment, testing, and care recommendations.

**The Doctor's In
c/o Choices**
444 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Clear YOUR HEAD

One in four Americans suffer from allergies each year. Here's how to cope.

by Tara Higgins, R.Ph.

People who suffer from seasonal allergies know that the coming of spring means more than just warmer days. Seasonal allergies affect about 40 million people each year. And now, researchers suggest that our changing climate is contributing to extending and worsening the allergy season.

What is an allergy?

An allergy is an overreaction of your body's immune system to an allergen, a foreign substance that is either eaten, breathed into the lungs, injected (for example, a bee sting), or touched. Depending on the allergen, symptoms may include coughing, sneezing, itchy eyes, runny nose, scratchy throat, and rashes. In more severe cases, hives, low blood pressure, difficulty breathing, and even death may occur.

Prevention

Since there's no cure for allergies, the best strategy is to prevent exposure to the allergen altogether. However, with indoor and outdoor environmental allergens like various types of pollen, dust, and mold, it

can be difficult to prevent exposure. And it's getting more challenging because of climate change, which causes trees, weeds, and grasses to produce even more pollen.

So if you suffer from allergies, try these tips to combat the effects of the rising pollen count:

- Stay indoors on windy days or when pollen counts are high.
- Keep windows closed while traveling in the car and at home.
- Don't dry laundry outside.
- Shower after spending time outside to wash pollen off your skin and hair.
- If you have asthma, continue to use your controller medication to keep symptoms under control.

Treatment

With more people than ever experiencing seasonal allergy symptoms, it's no wonder the market for allergy remedies has grown to meet the demand. Medications come in pills, liquids, nasal sprays, eye drops, and topical creams or ointments—by prescription and over-the-counter.

Here's a look at some of the options for treating your allergy symptoms.

The High Cost of Allergies

\$18 billion a year

It's estimated that allergies come with an annual price tag of nearly \$18 billion. The vast majority of this amount goes for drugs, with office visits coming in a distant second. When choosing an allergy treatment, be sure to consider all of the facts. Prescription medications for allergies cost on average \$55 per month. A comparable over-the-counter drug may only cost \$8. Take into account the drug's effectiveness and cost, and talk to your doctor about what's right for you.

Medications			
	How they work	Prescription examples	Over-the-counter examples
		Lowercased drugs are generic. Capitalized drugs are brand name.	
Nasal corticosteroids	Prevent and treat inflammation (swelling)	Beconase®, Rhinocort Aqua®, Nasonex®, fluticasone (Flonase®, Veramyst®), flunisolide (Nasarel®), Nasacort AQ®, Omnaris®	Not available
Antihistamines	Block histamine, which is a chemical released by the body in response to an allergen	Clarinet®, fexofenadine (Allegra®), Xyzal®	diphenhydramine (Benadryl®), cetirizine (Zyrtec®), loratadine (Claritin®)
Decongestants	Relieve nasal and sinus congestion Note: After brief use, nasal sprays and drops can actually worsen inflammation.	Not available	pseudoephedrine (Sudafed®), phenylephrine (Sudafed PE®), oxymetazoline (Afrin®), Dristan®
Nasal mast cell stabilizers	Prevent and treat inflammation (swelling)	Tilade®	cromolyn sodium (Nasal crom®)
Leukotriene modifiers	Block leukotrienes, which are inflammatory chemicals released by the body in response to an allergen	Singulair®, Accolate®	Not available
Immunotherapy (allergy shots)	Builds the body's resistance to the allergen	Administered in doctor's office	Not available
Natural remedies			
Saline nasal spray or nasal irrigation	Relieves nasal congestion; safe for young children and pregnant women		Various brands
Protective gear Masks, gloves, clothing	Protects against exposure to allergens		Various brands
High efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters Heating/cooling system in the home; vacuum cleaner; standalone air purifier	Traps airborne allergens inside the home so air is cleaner; cleans allergens from household surfaces		Various brands

In some cases, a combination of medications is indicated to block the allergy response in different ways. However, it's important not to "double up" on two medications in the same category. For example, don't take two antihistamines because the two drugs compete against each other, which makes them both less effective. Plus, it means increased side effects like drowsiness, dry mouth, or constipation.

Where to go for help

With so many choices, it's hard to know which allergy medication is right for you. Talk to your doctor or healthcare provider for recommendations. Your pharmacist can also help you find an over-the-counter treatment to help your symptoms, and make sure that it does not interact with your other medications or conditions. ■

What You May Not Know About Hospice



Misconceptions about hospice prevent many people from taking advantage of this important service.

by Leslie Lowenstein

A 2007 study published in the *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* found that some terminally ill patients live longer when in hospice care. In fact, the mean survival was days and, in some cases, months longer on average among hospice patients than non-hospice patients. Yet many people—even doctors—still think the pain management that hospice offers will make patients die faster.

“The perception is that you’re trading quantity of life for quality of life,” says Ed Martin, M.D., Chief Medical Officer of Home & Hospice Care of Rhode Island. But that’s not the case. Hospice does improve quality of life—for both patients and their families—through attention to physical and emotional well-being, and those comforts may actually give patients more strength and will to live.

Medical guidelines are changing, too, so that patients can now access hospice earlier. “Our patients still have a very limited life expectancy. But we’re here to

provide care in their final months of life,” Dr. Martin clarifies. Hospice is available to people with any life-limiting illness, such as heart disease, kidney disease, dementia, or Parkinson’s disease.

Hospice doesn’t mean giving up treatment.

Another misconception people may have about hospice is that they have to give up all treatment to qualify for hospice care. It’s true that hospice serves people with life-limiting illnesses who are not seeking aggressive, curative treatment. “But patients can still get treatment to help prevent pain,” says Dr. Martin. “It’s not to cure the illness, but to provide comfort. This can include chemotherapy and radiation.”

Hospice will provide services alongside the patient’s other healthcare providers, even in a hospital setting. They can help manage symptoms or side effects of treatment, such as pain, nausea, shortness of breath, and anxiety.

And it’s important to note that if patients improve or decide they want to try another treatment option after they’ve started hospice care, they can leave

hospice and still have the option to return at a later time.

Hospice is for the family, too.

“A huge part of our service helps family members,” says Dr. Martin. Hospice provides a team of specialists, including doctors, nurses, social workers, counselors, and others who care for the patient’s needs and the family’s needs. They may offer emotional support for family members who are feeling a lot of stress and anxiety. They can help families sort out health coverage questions or assist with funeral arrangements. And they provide bereavement services such as grief counseling and support groups.

When is the right time for hospice?

If you think you or a family member might need hospice, learn as much as you can—sooner rather than later. Talk to your doctor, use the resources below to do online research, and contact local hospice resources. The more you know about the services available in your area, the better informed you’ll be to decide when the time is right for hospice. ■

Online Resources

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (nhpco.org)
Hospice Net (hospicenet.org)

American Cancer Society (cancer.org)
Home & Hospice Care of Rhode Island (hhcri.org)

Same treatment.



One third the cost.



A visit to the emergency department for non-emergency care means you spend more time and money for the same care. If it isn’t urgent, check with your doctor first.

For more on these and other choices, visit healthymoves.org

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5 Ways to Avoid Arthritis

Reduce your risk for arthritis, or manage arthritis symptoms, with these tips.

by Mary Barlow

Many people think arthritis simply comes with “old age.” However, more than half of those diagnosed with the disease are under 65. And while it’s true that aging and genetic factors increase your risk of developing arthritis, it’s also true that a healthy lifestyle significantly decreases your odds. What you eat, how much you exercise, and whether you smoke can also ease symptoms if you already suffer with arthritis.

Arthritis is defined as simply inflammation of joints, but it is a complicated disease with more than 120 forms. It can cause pain, stiffness, swelling, and other problems not just to the joints, but to muscles, bones, and in some cases, even skin. The most common type is osteoarthritis, which occurs when cartilage in joints breaks down.

Since arthritis is the number one cause for disability among Americans, a little prevention can go a long way. Here’s what you can do right now to decrease

your risk of getting arthritis or relieve your symptoms if you’ve been diagnosed. (These recommendations apply mostly to preventing osteoarthritis, but they include good general health advice for almost everyone.)

1. Exercise.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 20 to 30 minutes of aerobic activity most days of the week, and strength training at least two days a week for everyone, including people with chronic conditions such as arthritis. This is consistent with recommendations of the Arthritis Foundation and other

arthritis experts who agree that:

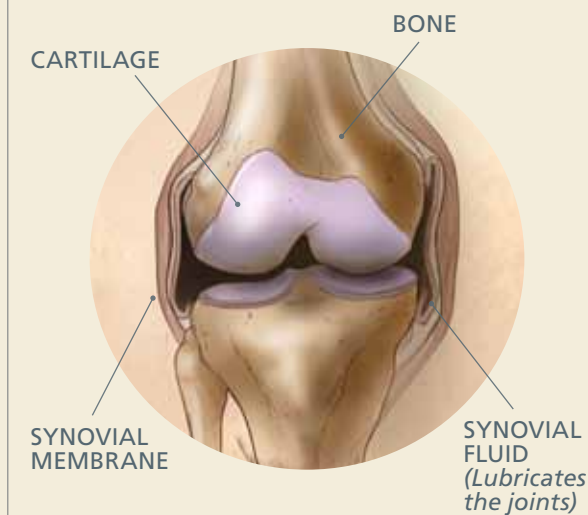
- **Aerobic** (walking, running) and **stretching** (yoga, tai chi) exercises help keep your joints supple and well lubricated.
- **Strength training** (free weights, nautilus machines, Pilates) helps you maintain bone mass and strong muscles around the joints, helping to protect them.

Researchers are now finding that our bodies wear more from lack of use than from exercise. For example, it was once thought that long-distance running put people at higher risk for osteoarthritis, particularly around the knees. However,

Anatomy of a Joint

Joints provide hinges for where two bones meet. There are 360 joints in the body, which allow your body to move. However, when these parts are inflamed, swollen, or weak—as in the case of various forms of arthritis—pain and stiffness result, limiting the joint’s mobility.

Healthy joint



according to a recent study published in the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, “Vigorous exercise (running) at middle and older ages is associated with reduced disability in later life and a notable survival advantage.” (For more information on running and fitness, please see page 24.)

2. Eat a healthy diet.

Aim to get all of the nutrients your body needs to properly function and to take in the right amount of calories to sustain your ideal weight. That’s easy to say, but tricky to do. Recent studies have shown that the Mediterranean diet is the best one known to prevent and ease arthritis. It emphasizes plenty of vegetables, fish, fruit, and nuts, and fewer red and processed (e.g., ham, bacon, deli meats, and hot dogs) meats.

3. Maintain a healthy weight.

People who are obese are four times as likely to develop osteoarthritis of the knees. This is mainly due to two reasons. First, excess weight puts added pressure on the joints, and second, being heavy limits activity. Since a lack of exercise is another risk factor, it only worsens the problem. If losing weight has been difficult, try to make gradual changes. For instance, if you can eat 250 fewer calories a day while burning up 250 more calories

a day, you could potentially lose a pound a week. Depending on your lifestyle, that might mean replacing a rich snack with a brisk walk.

4. Talk with your doctor about supplements.

The best source of any nutrient comes from food. However, when it’s difficult to get adequate vitamins and minerals from your diet, it may be wise to talk to your doctor about taking supplements.

• **Calcium** is highly important in preventing osteoporosis, a type of bone disease that causes weak, brittle bones. While osteoporosis is not arthritis, it can cause painful fractures or make joint replacement surgery more difficult. The recommended amount of calcium for adults is 1,000 mg for 19 to 50 year olds, 1,200 mg for adults over 50, and 1,300 mg for pregnant and breast-feeding women. Try to limit substances that decrease calcium absorption, including alcohol, caffeine, and tea.

• **Omega-3 fatty acids** have been shown to reduce inflammation in people with rheumatoid arthritis. Fish, particularly cold-water fish such as salmon, provide the best source of omega-3 fatty acids. You can also get them from flaxseed, walnut, and canola oil. If you’d prefer supplements, the American Academy of Family Physicians recommends 3 grams

per day to reduce morning stiffness for people with rheumatoid arthritis.

• **Glucosamine**, often taken with **chondroitin sulfate**, helps relieve pain, according to many people who suffer from arthritis. However, a study* done in February 2006 found that glucosamine “did not provide significant relief from osteoarthritis pain among all participants.” A small subgroup of participants who had “moderate-to-severe pain showed significant relief with the combined supplements.” The Arthritis Foundation recommends that patients considering glucosamine work with their doctors to come up with a treatment plan that’s best for them.

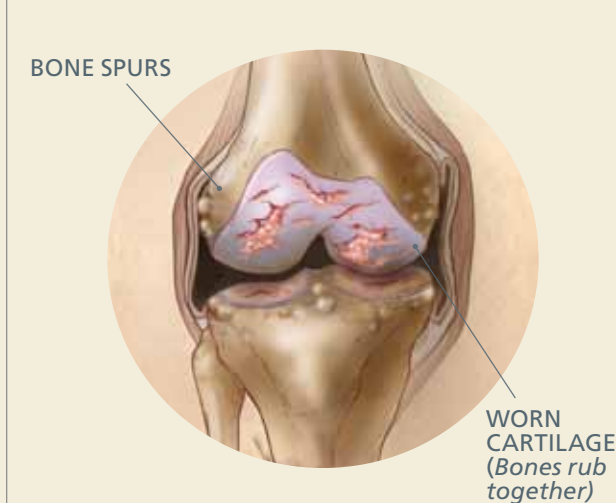
5. Avoid smoking and secondhand smoke.

Smoking and secondhand smoke weigh heavily on the immune system, increasing the risk of rheumatoid arthritis for people who have a genetic predisposition for the disease. For people who already have rheumatoid arthritis, smoking is also known to worsen symptoms and increase the risk of complications.

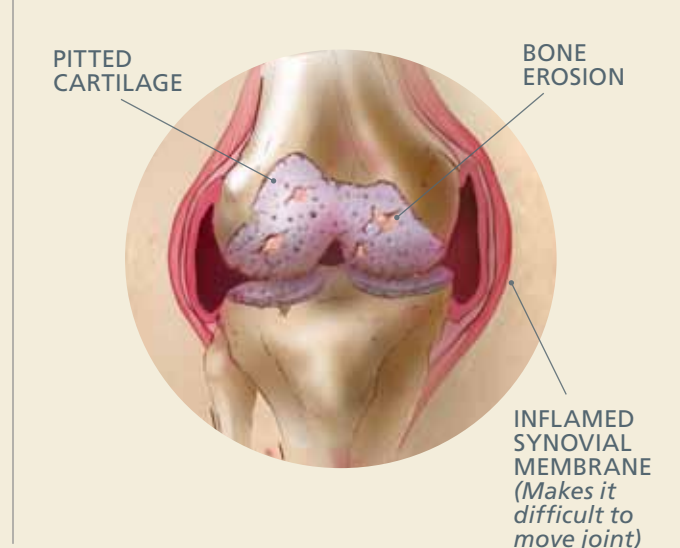
For more information, please visit the Arthritis Foundation at arthritis.org.

*The study was the Glucosamine/Chondroitin Arthritis Intervention Trial (GAIT) funded by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine and the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases.

Joint afflicted by osteoarthritis



Joint afflicted by rheumatoid arthritis



Run for your Life

by Peter Gallant

Learn how to start a running program—and why you should.

Spring has sprung and it's time to take your activities outdoors again. If you're looking for a healthy way to take advantage of the season change, why not try starting (or restarting) a regular running program?

The list of health benefits from running is a mile long—it's a great way to lose weight, improve your cardiovascular conditioning, reduce your risk of disease, elevate your mood, and lower your stress, just to name a few. Running also increases metabolism for up to two days *after* a workout. (So your body is still moving in a healthy direction even though you're not moving at all.)

Plus, running is something that people of all ages can do. While it's not advisable for children under 12 to train or run competitively, it's perfectly OK to take healthy, sensibly paced jogs around the neighborhood with your little ones. And on the other end of the spectrum, Dimitrion Yordanidis and Jenny Wood-Allen prove that age is just a number, really! According to the *Guinness World Records*, Dimitrion, at 98 years old, and Jenny, at 90 years old, are the oldest man and woman to complete a marathon.

A good pair of shoes

Before starting any running or jogging program, get your doctor's OK if you're over 40, overweight, have a medical condition, or if you haven't been active for a while. Once you've got clearance, it's time to shop for shoes.



Many running injuries to heels, shins, knees, hips, and backs can be avoided (or at least the risk diminished considerably) by wearing the right shoes. That's why it's so important to have a knowledgeable professional analyze your gait and make a footwear recommendation before you start your program. Shop at a store that specializes in high-performance athletic footwear, and speak with someone who is a seasoned runner. The shape of your foot (whether you have low, high, or neutral arches), your stride (bio-mechanics), the amount of running you plan on doing,

and the terrain you plan to run on, are all factors that he or she will take into account. Don't skimp on quality when making your purchase. You only have one pair of feet, so it's important to take care of them.

Put it all together

If you haven't run in years (or not at all), don't worry about setting any records and don't get discouraged if you run out of steam. Try walking for a bit and jogging slowly for a bit as you build up your time, distance, and endurance. Stay properly hydrated, and remember to warm up before you run and cool down after. Engaging in two to five minutes of gentle, slow stretching will help keep you limber and avoid injury.

The right form

Before you hit the road, take a look at proper running form.

Shoulders

Having a relaxed upper body is an important part of optimum posture, so keep your shoulders low, loose, and level.

Arms/Hands

Position arms at your side with elbows at a 90-degree angle and hands relaxed with fingers lightly touching (never clench your fists, it creates too much tension). Swing arms forward and back in rhythm between your waist and lower chest. Try not to go across your chest.

Head

Keep your chin up and look straight ahead (not down at your feet). This will ensure that your neck and back are in natural alignment.

Breathing

Inhale through your nose (with lips pursed), and exhale out of your mouth. This will allow you to both take in more air and empty your lungs completely. *Tip:* Use your breathing as a guide to gauge your pace. If you can't carry on a conversation while you run, you're probably going too fast. If you can talk with ease, you might want to step it up a little.

Stride

As you run, your feet should land directly underneath your body. Make sure your knee is slightly flexed as your foot hits the ground, so it can naturally absorb the impact. *Tip:* Unless you're a sprinter, you don't need to have a high knee lift while running. A slight knee lift and short stride is best for new runners/joggers.

Running resources

Cool Running

coolrunning.com

Features a comprehensive race calendar, race results listings, training advice, and more.

GMAPs Pedometer

gmap-pedometer.com

Great for tracking, recording, measuring, and saving your running routes.



Eating Well, Italian-Style

by Patrick Carney



A chef replaces fat with flavor in this lasagna recipe makeover.

Just about everyone loves Italian food—it’s the most popular ethnic cuisine in the United States. Spaghetti, meatballs, pizza, and chicken Parmesan have become staples of the typical American diet, as has another favorite: lasagna.

This ancient recipe, which takes its name from the Latin word for “cooking pot,” is a delicious casserole of meats, cheeses, sauce, and spices. However, lasagna comes with a price—it’s high in calories and fat. The good news is you can make lasagna that’s both healthy and delicious.

A Modern Lasagna

So what’s the trick? It’s simple, according to Chef Bill Idell: “Replace fat with flavor.” As Chef Instructor at Johnson & Wales University’s Culinary Nutrition program in Providence, Rhode Island, Chef Idell would know. He teaches future chefs how to balance flavor and healthfulness when creating recipes. “You can cook the most healthful dish in the world, but no one will eat it if it doesn’t taste good,” he says. And the easiest way to add flavor is through fresh herbs and spices.

To demonstrate this, Chef Idell did a healthy makeover of a traditional lasagna recipe. The traditional recipe contains 502 calories and 28 grams of fat per serving. By making a few changes, he cut the fat content in half. The healthier recipe contains 342 calories and only 14 grams of fat!

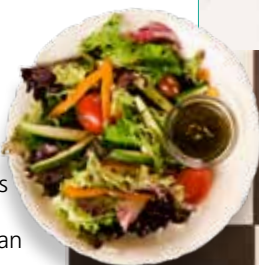
TRADITIONAL RECIPE	HEALTHFUL RECIPE
ORIGINAL INGREDIENT	REPLACED WITH
1 lb. sweet Italian pork sausage	½ lb. smoked turkey sausage
¾ lb. ground beef (70% lean)	½ lb. lean ground beef (90% lean)
½ cup minced onion	½ cup minced onion
2 cloves garlic, crushed	13 cloves garlic
28 oz. crushed tomatoes (1 can)	28 oz. crushed tomatoes (1 can)
12 oz. tomato paste (2 cans)	12 oz. tomato paste (2 cans)
13 oz. tomato sauce (2 cans)	13 oz. tomato sauce (2 cans)
16 oz. ricotta cheese	16 oz. cottage cheese
12 oz. mozzarella cheese	12 oz. part-skim mozzarella cheese
¾ cup parmesan cheese	½ cup parmesan cheese
9 oz. lasagna noodles (one box)	9 oz. lasagna noodles (one box)
1 egg	1 egg
2 Tbsp. white sugar	1 Tbsp. olive oil
Spices: 1½ tsp. dried basil, 1 tsp. Italian seasoning, 1 Tbsp. salt, ¼ tsp. black pepper, ½ tsp. salt	Spices: 2 bay leaves, 2 tsp. chopped fresh thyme, 3 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley, 4 Tbsp. chopped fresh basil, 1½ Tbsp. salt, ¼ tsp. black pepper, ½ tsp. fennel seeds

Go for a Side Salad

A great complement to this lasagna is a fresh garden salad. But don’t drown in it a high-calorie, high-fat dressing from the store. Here’s a simple, easy dressing you can make at home. This recipe makes enough for 10 servings.

Ingredients	1Tbsp. of honey
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil	½ tsp. dried oregano
¾ cup balsamic vinegar	2 tsp. Dijon mustard
1 clove garlic, crushed	pinch of salt and pepper

To make the dressing, just combine the above ingredients in a jar with a tight lid. Then shake it up before serving. Feel free to have your salad before, with, or—in true Italian style—after the meal.



New World Lasagna

Makes 10 servings

1. Wrap 10 peeled garlic cloves and 1 Tbsp. olive oil in aluminum foil. Roast at 375°F for 20-30 minutes, or until the garlic is soft and golden brown.

2. In a Dutch oven, cook sausage, ground beef, onion, and 3 cloves of crushed garlic over medium heat until well browned. Stir in crushed tomatoes, tomato paste, and tomato sauce. If the sauce seems too thick, add a little water to thin it. Season with pepper, fennel seeds, fresh thyme, 1 Tbsp. of salt, and bay leaves. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for about 1½ hours, stirring occasionally. Then stir in the fresh basil and 2 Tbsp. of fresh parsley.

3. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Cook lasagna noodles in boiling water for 8 to 10 minutes. Drain noodles, and rinse with cold water.

4. Drain any excess liquid off of the cottage cheese. Place cottage cheese and roasted garlic in a food processor and pulse until smooth. Add the egg, remaining parsley, and remaining salt, then pulse the mixture again. *Note:* If you’re not a garlic lover, add garlic to taste.

5. Preheat oven to 375°F.

6. To assemble, spread 1½ cups of meat sauce in the bottom of a 9x13 inch baking dish. Arrange 6 noodles lengthwise over meat sauce. Spread with one half of the cottage cheese mixture. Top with a third of mozzarella cheese slices. Spoon another 1½ cups meat sauce over the mozzarella, and sprinkle with ¼ cup Parmesan cheese. Repeat layers, and top with remaining mozzarella and Parmesan cheese. Cover with foil. To prevent sticking, either spray the foil with cooking spray, or make sure it doesn’t touch the cheese.

7. Bake in preheated oven for 25 minutes. Remove foil, and bake an additional 25 minutes. Cool for 15 minutes before serving.

Your Choices

MEN

Not Just for New Moms

It's a common misconception that only new mothers suffer from postpartum depression. Nearly as many fathers (10 percent) suffer from it as mothers (14 percent), for a variety of reasons. These include a fear or anxiety about how good they'll be in their new role, worries about added responsibilities and loss of freedom, stress over finances, and lack of sleep, to name a few. Postpartum depression occurs more often in first-time fathers.

If you're experiencing behavior changes since the birth of your baby, such as irritability, hostility, a sense of failure, withdrawal (from your partner and/or the baby), and aggressiveness, it might be time to address the issue. If ignored, these feelings can lead to other significant problems. The following may help you get through it:

- » **Realize that you are not alone**—postpartum depression affects many people, and it doesn't mean you are a bad parent.
- » **Talk (and listen) to your partner** about the changes that you are both experiencing. A new baby is an amazing, life-changing—and stressful—experience. Be sure that you are both on the same page emotionally.
- » **Fathers' symptoms usually pass quicker than mothers'**, but if they persist or worsen, seek professional help from a doctor, counselor, or other health-care professional. If you can, do this with your partner. If you have a history of depression and are expecting a baby, seek help before the baby arrives.



The Swing of Things

The air is starting to warm and the birds are chirping once again. For many, that means it's time to dust off the golf clubs and hit the links. But before doing so, here's what every golfer (male or female) should do to get ready:

- » If you haven't been exercising, **start an exercise routine** to stay fit and help avoid injury. Make sure to include some cardio, stretching, and weight training. You should pay special attention to muscle groups that you'll use often while playing,
- » **Make sure your clubs are in good shape.** Do they still "fit"? Clubs that are the wrong size can actually create bad body mechanics and lead to injury. Do your grips need to be replaced?
- » **Ensure that your golf shoes still fit properly.** If not, invest in a new pair. It is critically important to have comfortable, well-fitting shoes.
- » **Get some practice first.** And if you're still fairly new, don't be too proud to get some professional instruction—it will benefit you in the long run.

Fight the Night Bites

It's late and you can't sleep, so you decide to watch TV. The next thing you know, you've put away an entire bag of potato chips. Sound familiar? Late-night snacking can be a sneaky way to pack on pounds and undo an otherwise healthy diet. Most people don't snack at night because they're actually hungry, but because they're bored or just used to an unhealthy routine. Here are four ways to "crunch" the munchies:

1. **Try to eat more frequent, smaller meals throughout the day.** This will keep you feeling full longer and stop you from ravaging the refrigerator at midnight.
2. **Don't watch as much television, especially late at night.** Focus on doing other things to keep your mind

and body occupied, such as housework or reading.

3. **Don't keep junk food in the house.** It will probably be your first choice if it's there and you feel like snacking.
4. **If you're really hungry and want something to nibble on,** choose snacks that have protein and carbohydrates, such as:
 - » Cottage cheese
 - » Apple slices
 - » Low-fat yogurt with fruit
 - » Peanut butter, or a handful of almonds
 - » A glass of low-fat milk, because calcium relaxes muscles, which can help you sleep better



Your Choices

WOMEN

Are You at Risk for Ovarian Cancer?

It's estimated that one woman in 58 will develop ovarian cancer during her lifetime. While there are no definitive screening tests for ovarian cancer, the American Cancer Society and other women's health organizations have identified the following symptoms, which could be an early sign of ovarian cancer:

- » Bloating
- » Pelvic or abdominal pain
- » Urgent or frequent urination
- » Difficulty eating or feeling full very quickly

It's important to remember that these symptoms do not necessarily mean that a woman has ovarian cancer. There are many other more common and less harmful conditions that can produce similar symptoms, such as irritable bowel syndrome and urinary tract infection. You should see a gynecologist if any of these problems are new, or if symptoms are severe or have been present continuously for more than two weeks. If you have a history of ovarian cancer, let your doctor know as part of your routine care.

For more information on ovarian cancer, please visit the National Cancer Institute at cancer.gov.



8 Foods You Should Be Eating

Are any of these foods making it onto your plate? If not, they should be. These foods are packed with health-boosting fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants—not to mention flavor. Including them in your diet can help fight disease, lower cholesterol, and promote digestive health. And they're all waiting for you at your local supermarket.



Pregnancy S.O.S.

The bigger your belly gets during pregnancy, the harder it becomes to get a good night's sleep. Some common problems include discomfort due to the increased size of your belly, back pain, heartburn, shortness of breath, and, of course, frequent trips to the bathroom.

According to the American Pregnancy Association, the best pregnancy sleep position is "S.O.S."—sleep on side. Even better is to sleep on your left side because it increases the amount of blood and nutrients that reach the placenta—and your baby. Get creative with pillows to make yourself as comfortable as possible, such as keeping a pillow between your knees, using pillows to prop yourself up (good if you're having heartburn) and for supporting your back or abdomen. Be sure to avoid sleeping on your back or your stomach as these positions can decrease blood flow and cause a variety of problems.



Toss the Gloss

Cosmetics don't come with an expiration date, so many women assume that they last indefinitely (or until they go out of fashion).

But makeup can harbor bacteria, mold, and fungus, which can cause skin problems, eye infections, and other problems. So the first time you use a new cosmetic, write the date on the package. Then use the guide below to decide when to toss. If you use organic or natural products, they may need to be thrown away sooner.

Mascara	3 months	Lipstick/lip gloss	1 year
Liquid eyeliner	6 months	Powder foundation	1 year
Liquid foundation	6 months	Powder blush/eyeshadow	1 year
Cream blush/eyeshadow	6 months	Lip/eye pencils	1 year

Your Choices CHILDREN



Breathe Easier

Using a ceiling fan while your baby sleeps has been shown to reduce the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) by as much as 72 percent, according to a recent study in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.

While the cause of SIDS remains a mystery, doctors believe it may occur when an otherwise healthy baby sleeps in a confined space that traps his or her breath. As the baby breathes the same air over and over, the amount of oxygen drops and the amount of carbon dioxide increases. Gradually, there isn't enough oxygen in the air to sustain the baby.

The study found that the simple act of turning on a ceiling fan keeps air circulating enough to significantly reduce the risk of SIDS. Of course, other precautions should still be taken, including:

- » Put baby to sleep on his or her back
- » Remove all blankets, pillows, toys, and the bumper from the crib
- » Use a firm mattress
- » Dress baby in a sleep sack
- » Keep baby's room cool with the door open
- » Check on baby periodically

It's important to remind your child's caregivers to put the baby to sleep on his or her back, and follow the other precautions above. For more information on SIDS, please visit the American Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Institute at sids.org.

Ready to Learn?

Everyone knows that exercise is good for the body, but did you know that it's also good for the brain? Recent studies show one of the best ways to boost your kids' success in school is to be sure they get enough vigorous exercise every day.

Experts speculate that physical activity boosts academic performance by increasing blood flow to the brain and allowing kids to burn off pent-up energy. This increases their memory and enables kids to better focus on their studies and pay attention in the classroom. Exercise also releases natural chemicals in the brain that improve self-esteem and mood, helping kids have a better attitude toward learning.

What's more, research shows schools that actively promote physical education and good nutrition are seeing substantial increases in reading and math scores.

If you want ideas on how to help your child (and the whole family) be more active, visit wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov.



The 411 on 911

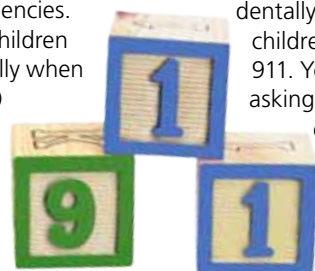
When an emergency strikes, proper preparation can be the key to avoiding a tragedy. By teaching your children how to use 911, you may be able to help them save a life.

Explain why. The first step is to make sure your children know that calling 911 is only for an emergency, and should never be used as a joke. If your children are young, you may have to provide some examples of emergencies. (The best time to teach children how to use 911 is generally when they are 3 to 4 years old.) You can reassure them by explaining that 911 connects us to special people in the community who are trained to

help if an emergency such as a fire or bad injury occurs.

Address the basics. If your children don't already know their address and phone number, teach them as part of this training. Your children should also know all your family's cell phone numbers.

Practice to be perfect. Role playing can give your children the skill and confidence they'll need to call 911 in an emergency. Unplug the phone (so you don't accidentally call 911) and have your children pretend they are calling 911. You can act as the dispatcher, asking each child to explain the emergency. Remind them to remain calm, speak clearly and slowly, and stay on the line until they are instructed to hang up.



Your Choices OLDER ADULTS

Free Drug Samples: Should you take them?

The answer depends on who you ask.

Proponents of the freebies say they're an effective way to help lower out-of-pocket prescription costs, serve as a safety net for the needy and uninsured, and allow patients to experience the benefits (and test the side effects) of drugs without making a copayment.

Critics, however, counter that free samples are designed to influence which drugs your doctor prescribes and which drugs you buy. They also say these giveaways don't typically go to the most needy, actually increase costs overall, and are for newer drugs with a shorter track record of use and, therefore, known safety.

A recent study in the journal *Medical Care* found that patients who didn't get free drug samples spent \$178 out-of-pocket on prescriptions over six months. Patients who received at least one free sample spent (out of pocket):

- **\$166** on prescriptions over the six-month period before they received free samples
- **\$244** on prescriptions over the six-month period while they were receiving free samples
- **\$212** on prescriptions over the six-month period after they received free samples

In other words, they paid the **most** for prescriptions during the time when they received at least one free medication sample. One reason for this was patients filled their prescriptions with the brand-name sample drugs and not generic equivalents.

Bottom line: Before you accept any "free" samples, ask your doctor about cheaper generic alternatives, prescribing larger supplies (like a 90-day supply instead of a 30-day supply), or discontinuing any non-essential medicine.

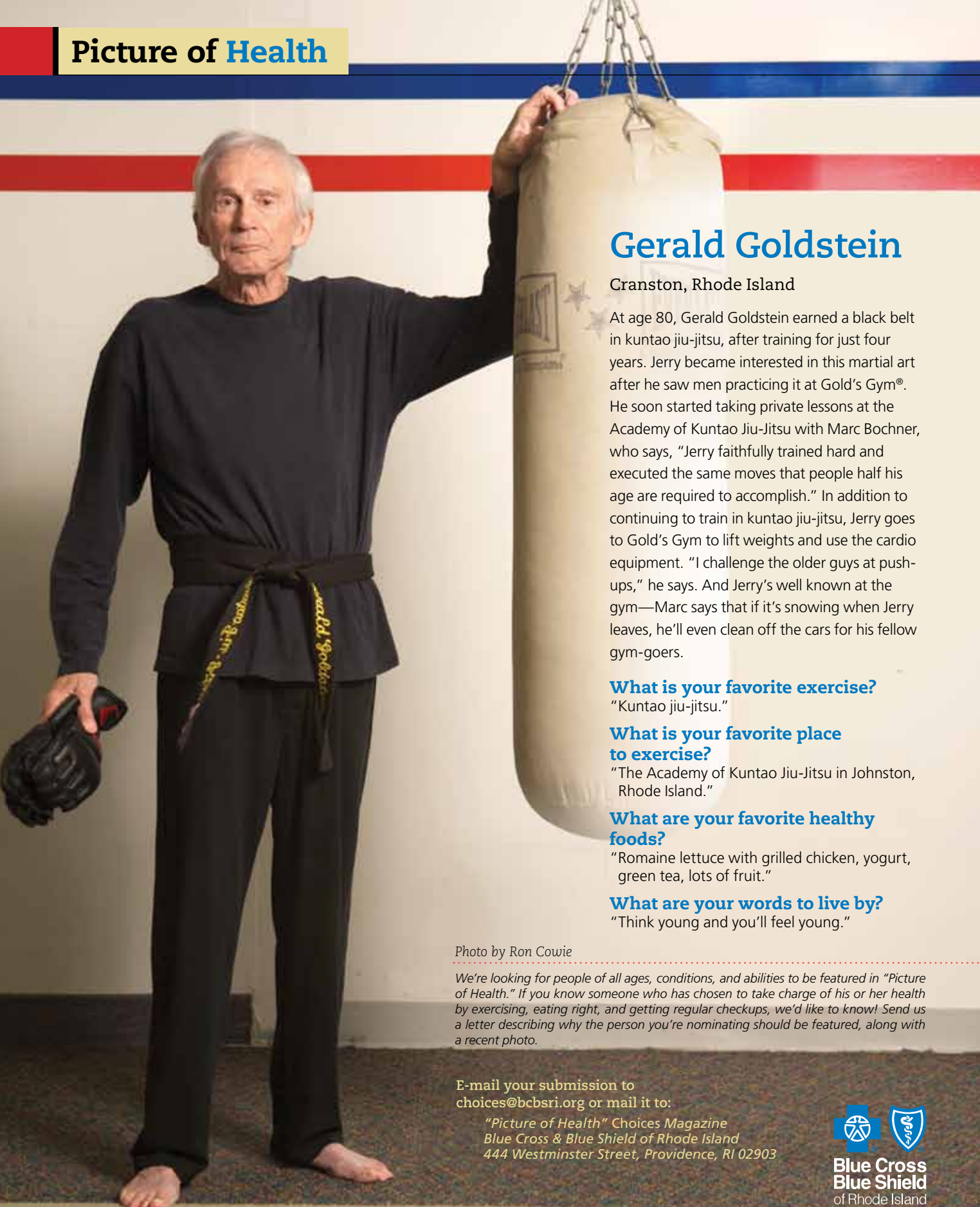


5 Tips for Safe Travels

It's always fun to get away from your regular routine. But if you have health conditions, you should never take a vacation from your health and safety:



- 1. Get medical clearance.** Ask your doctor if it's safe to travel, and if changes in weather, altitude, or other conditions at your destination could affect your health. Also ask if conditions during travel are safe (for example, if airplane cabin oxygen levels are safe for people with lung disease).
- 2. Keep it in your carry-on.** Pack any medications you have (in their original, labeled containers), along with medical supplies, in your carry-on bag—NEVER in your checked bags. (For a list of carry-on do's and don'ts, visit tsa.gov.)
- 3. Report at the airport.** Tell airport staff of any disabilities or medical conditions you have. If your doctor says that you shouldn't go through a metal detector or be hand-wanded, officers can pat-search you in a private room.
- 4. Defend against DVT.** Deep-vein thrombosis (DVT) occurs when blood clots form in veins and block blood flow. Older adults are at greater risk, and sitting for long periods on a plane can contribute to DVT. Get up and move around occasionally, and ask your doctor about "compression" socks.
- 5. Remember your diet.** Traveling often means eating new foods that are higher in salt or calories than you're used to. People with salt-restricted diets, such as those with congestive heart failure, and people who watch calories, such as those with diabetes, need to be extra careful.



Gerald Goldstein

Cranston, Rhode Island

At age 80, Gerald Goldstein earned a black belt in kung fu jiu-jitsu, after training for just four years. Jerry became interested in this martial art after he saw men practicing it at Gold's Gym®. He soon started taking private lessons at the Academy of Kung Fu Jiu-Jitsu with Marc Bochner, who says, "Jerry faithfully trained hard and executed the same moves that people half his age are required to accomplish." In addition to continuing to train in kung fu jiu-jitsu, Jerry goes to Gold's Gym to lift weights and use the cardio equipment. "I challenge the older guys at push-ups," he says. And Jerry's well known at the gym—Marc says that if it's snowing when Jerry leaves, he'll even clean off the cars for his fellow gym-goers.

What is your favorite exercise?
"Kung fu jiu-jitsu."

What is your favorite place to exercise?
"The Academy of Kung Fu Jiu-Jitsu in Johnston, Rhode Island."

What are your favorite healthy foods?
"Romaine lettuce with grilled chicken, yogurt, green tea, lots of fruit."

What are your words to live by?
"Think young and you'll feel young."

Photo by Ron Cowie

We're looking for people of all ages, conditions, and abilities to be featured in "Picture of Health." If you know someone who has chosen to take charge of his or her health by exercising, eating right, and getting regular checkups, we'd like to know! Send us a letter describing why the person you're nominating should be featured, along with a recent photo.

E-mail your submission to choices@bcbsri.org or mail it to:

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