

Helping you make ● the most of your healthcare

# choices



› **The flu:  
What to do**

› **3 comforting  
crock pot recipes**

› **When dairy  
does you wrong**

+

**How to prevent  
head trauma**

**The secrets  
of spa safety**

## **30 minute TOTAL BODY WORKOUT**

Two routines to  
try at home



**Blue Cross  
Blue Shield**  
of Rhode Island

Your Plan for Life.™

[www.BCBSRI.com](http://www.BCBSRI.com)

[Online]

## Top 5 Reasons You'll Love Choices Online

### 1. More recipes

All your *Choices* favorites, plus ones not included in the magazine



### 4. Money savings

Blue365® discounts on health-related products and services



### 2. Web extras

Extended interviews and articles



### 5. Health trackers

For your exercise and eating habits



### 3. Free programs

To help you lose weight, reduce stress, and more



Visit **BCBSRI.com** and click on

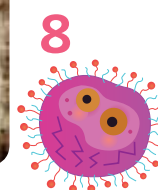
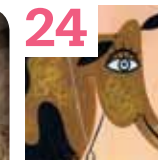
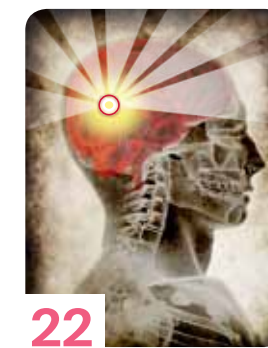


## features

- 8 The Flu: What to Do**  
Learn how to help prevent both seasonal and H1N1 flu—and what to do if you become sick.  
*by Julie O'Connell*
- 11 Acetaminophen: A Dose of Caution**  
This drug is the number one cause of liver failure in the United States. These four tips will help you use it safely.  
*by Tara Higgins, R.Ph.*
- 18 The Secrets of Spa Safety**  
Spa services aren't always as safe as you think. Here's how to protect yourself.  
*by Mary Barlow*
- 21 Improve Your Dental IQ**  
Get the answers to three common questions about dental health.
- 22 The Impact of Head Trauma**  
Two doctors explain what you should know about traumatic brain injuries.  
*by Peter Gallant*
- 24 When Dairy Does You Wrong**  
Lactose intolerance is a very common condition. Learn how you can live well with it.  
*by Beth Adamo*

## in every issue

- 2 First Choice**  
*by Julie O'Connell*
- 3 Q&A**  
**Michael Stanchina, M.D.**  
Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine, University Pulmonary Associates, East Greenwich, RI
- 4 Health Briefs**  
Plants that purify the air, three reasons to eat in, prescription drugs with similar names, and more.
- 6 Health Quiz**  
**How Do You See It?**  
Do carrots really improve your vision? Test your eye knowledge with this quiz.
- 7 How To Fuel Your Workouts**  
Paying attention to what and when you eat can help you reach your exercise goals.
- 12 Fitness**  
**30-Minute Total Body Workout**  
Looking for a quick, effective workout? Then try these two circuit training routines.  
*by Julie O'Connell*
- 17 The Doctor's In**  
Your questions answered on drug side effects and virtual colonoscopies.  
*by Peter Hollmann, M.D.*
- 26 Food**  
**Warm Up to Crock Pots**  
Make three comforting meals with little effort.  
*by Joseph Rotella*
- 28 Your Choices**  
Healthier football fare, how to reduce breast cancer risk, preventing TV tip-overs, social networking for older adults, and more.
- 32 Picture of Health**  
**David Dess, D.M.D.**  
Portsmouth, Rhode Island





If you have a crock pot buried in a closet somewhere, this might be just the time to pull it out.

I had to dig mine out from under serving trays and a precarious mountain of paper towel rolls. But after making the recipes on page 26, I couldn't believe I'd let my crock pot collect dust for so long. My husband makes a mean beef stew, but the beef stew recipe in this issue...he said it was the best he'd ever had. And I have to agree.

So that's how you can make great, healthy comfort food at home. On page 12, find out how to get a great workout at home with circuit training—it alternates cardiovascular exercises like jumping jacks with strength training exercises like push-ups. We include two complete circuits to get you started, and there's another one on [choices](#) at BCBSRI.com.

I'm writing this column from our new building, so if you write to us (and we love it when you do), please send your letter to the address at the bottom of the page. We're still in wonderful downtown Providence. To learn more about our new building, please see the ad on page 10.

And last but most important, please see page 8 for what you can do to prevent the flu—and what to do if you get sick. From all of us at BCBSRI, have a healthy and happy winter!

*Julie O'Connell*  
Julie O'Connell  
Editor

### 3 Things Not to Miss

[choices](#) on BCBSRI.com

On our new site, you'll find Web extras, your favorite recipes, online programs for losing weight and managing stress, and more. Here are the top three things featured now:

**Extra exercises**

- A third circuit training routine
- Videos of exercises

**Flu updates**

- Latest information on the flu
- 15 ways to stop the spread of flu in the home

**Bonus recipes**

- Italian vegetable soup
- Pulled chicken with vegetables

### Send any letters, comments, or general questions

to *Choices* magazine, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, 500 Exchange St., Providence, RI 02903 or via e-mail to [choices@bcsri.org](mailto:choices@bcsri.org). Please include a phone number so we can verify your letter. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.

## choices

BLUE CROSS & BLUE SHIELD  
OF RHODE ISLAND

Assistant Vice President  
Communications Services  
LAURA CALEDA

Editor  
JULIE O'CONNELL  
(401) 459-5747

Art Director  
JUAN CANO

Production Manager  
DENISE NILSEN

Publication Manager  
BRIAN HOMSI

Operations Manager  
KATHY PALUMBO

Contributing Staff

Editorial ..... BETH ADAMO, MARY BARLOW  
PETER GALLANT, BILL O'CONNELL  
JOSEPH ROTELLA

Design ..... PETER CAMPBELL, JULIE HETU  
ERO VALESIO

Production ..... SHARI DEWOLF

Client Services ..... CHRISTINA CHASE  
MARY-BETH GLAVIN  
JACQUELINE IBBITSON  
ERIN KILLORAN

*Choices* is issued quarterly by Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island. The editorial content of *Choices* is prepared in accordance with the highest standards of journalistic accuracy. Readers are cautioned, however, not to use information from the magazine as a substitute for regular professional healthcare. Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island does not endorse specific products, services, or treatments other than those provided by its benefit plans. This includes any products, services, or treatments that are advertised in *Choices*.

Editorial Offices  
*Choices*  
500 Exchange Street  
Providence, RI 02903-3279  
(401) 459-1000

Copyright 2009 by Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island. All rights reserved. Any reproduction, in whole or in part, by any means, without express written permission of Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, is prohibited.

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

Models are used for illustrative purposes only. CC-6001

### Michael Stanchina, M.D.

Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine,  
University Pulmonary Associates,  
East Greenwich, RI



As a board-certified physician in pulmonary, critical care, and sleep medicine, Dr. Michael Stanchina specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of a variety of sleep disorders. His work at Epoch Sleep Centers ([epochsc.com](http://epochsc.com)) is focused on improving the availability of screening tools and monitoring systems for treatment of patients with obstructive sleep apnea. We talked with him about how sleep disorders affect our health.

**Q: It seems like a lot of people don't get enough sleep. Why is that?**

**A:** It's estimated that 43 percent of patients express concerns about being tired during the day to their primary care doctors. Common causes of daytime sleepiness are often categorized in three groups of sleep disorders. First is chronic partial sleep deprivation, which is not achieving at least seven to seven and a half hours of sleep. It is frequently caused by self-imposed sleep restriction, or not getting enough sleep based on pressures in your job, your life, etc. The second group is sleep fragmenting disorders, such as obstructive sleep apnea, restlessness in the legs, and possibly insomnia, all which cause fragmented sleep and sleepiness. The third group is disorders of "sleep drive" such as narcolepsy, which is a genetic disorder leading a person to need more sleep than average in order to not be sleepy or have daytime fatigue.

**Q: When it comes to sleep deprivation, are there symptoms or signs to look for?**

**A:** The signs of sleepiness can be quite varied in different populations. Some people just simply complain of not being able to function during the day. They are

fatigued and have a lack of concentration or a lack of focus. Others complain of actually having difficulty staying awake, even when doing things like driving. Still even more unusual, sometimes symptoms of sleepiness can appear as depressive type symptoms, especially in women. In children, often you have sleep disorders that may show up with hyperactivity, the complete opposite of what appears to be sleepiness. If someone thinks they might have a sleep disorder, their doctor is the first line of defense.

**Q: What are the long-term health risks of sleep disorders?**

**A:** In studies, getting too little sleep or too much sleep on a regular basis has been associated with cardiovascular problems and increased mortality. Obstructive sleep apnea has also been associated with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and stroke. Treatment of sleep apnea with continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machines has been shown to reduce some of the cardiovascular risk.

**Q: What causes obstructive sleep apnea?**

**A:** Obstructive sleep apnea is a disorder characterized by repeated closure of the

airway during the night. It is caused by the combination of a narrowed upper airway (often associated with increased weight or increased neck size), and the drop out of upper airway muscle activity with the onset of sleep. So the combination of bad anatomy and loss of upper airway muscle tone contributes to the airway collapsing time after time during sleep.

**Q: What can people do to get a good night's sleep?**

**A:** To practice good sleep hygiene, or good sleep techniques, you should create a sleep environment that is adequately dark, quiet, comfortable, and promotes continuous sleep. You should avoid things that disrupt sleep such as drinking too much alcohol, eating too much too late, and probably most important is keeping a regular sleep schedule—waking up and going to bed at the same time each day. If you have concerns about your sleep, talk to your physician. ■



#### Learn more

Read more of Dr. Stanchina's interview online at

[choices](#) on BCBSRI.com

including additional information about:

- › Insomnia
- › Sleep disorders in children
- › Treatments for sleep disorders
- › Narcolepsy

#### Other resources

American Academy of Sleep Medicine  
[aasmnet.org](http://aasmnet.org)

Sleep Education  
[sleepeducation.com](http://sleepeducation.com)



## The Greenest Way to Clean

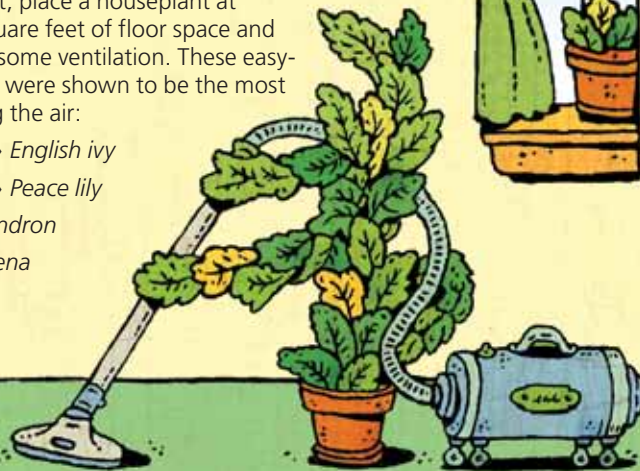


Okay, they can't vacuum your floors and they definitely don't do windows, but your houseplants do a lot more than just look nice.

According to a NASA study, common houseplants can actually purify the air in your home or office. This is good news, because the air is probably dirtier than you realize. In addition to external pollutants that can affect your air quality, household materials such as paints, insulation, and flooring can release volatile chemicals into the air (sometimes for years after installation).

For the most benefit, place a houseplant at about every 100 square feet of floor space and aim for a spot with some ventilation. These easy-to-care-for varieties were shown to be the most effective at cleaning the air:

- » *Bamboo palm* » *English ivy*
- » *Golden pothos* » *Peace lily*
- » *Heartleaf philodendron*
- » *Janet Craig dracaena*
- » *Spider plant*
- » *Weeping fig*



Art by Roger DeMuth

## 3 Reasons to Eat In

What's for dinner? If that question too often sends your family scrambling out the door to your favorite local restaurant, stop. By eating in, you can enjoy the many benefits of home cooking, including:



### A healthy diet.

When you prepare meals at home, you can choose healthy ingredients and limit high-fat, high-calorie foods. **Hints:** Ask the kids to help find recipes. Also, check out the easy crock pot recipes on page 26.



### Cost savings.

As you reduce the number of restaurant charges, your savings will grow. **Hint:** When you're done preparing a meal, pack leftovers before you eat. You'll eat less, and save more.



### Life lessons.

Meal time is the perfect time to teach your children how to cook, clean up, and even entertain. **Hint:** Set expectations (and reduce stress) by assigning regular mealtime responsibilities to your children.

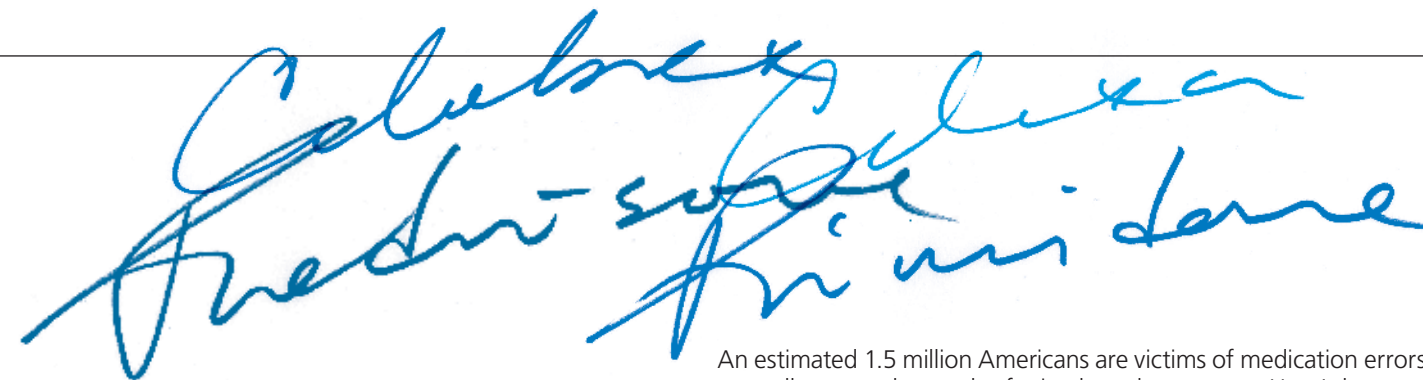
## MYTH or FACT?

**Cracking your knuckles can cause arthritis.**



### Myth!

There is no evidence to support this claim.



## What's In a Name?

With the boom in the number of new drugs approved by the FDA each year—many with similar-sounding or looking names—the risk of medication errors keeps increasing. Examples include *Prednisone* (a steroid) vs. *Primidone* (for convulsions) and *Celexa* (an antidepressant) vs. *Celebrex* (a pain medication).

An estimated 1.5 million Americans are victims of medication errors annually, many the result of mixed-up drug names. Here's how to protect yourself:

- » Ask your doctor what drug is being prescribed, including the strength. Make sure the drug name and instructions are clearly written.
- » Know what the drug is meant to treat and exactly how to take it. You can ask for the condition the drug is treating (such as high cholesterol) to be put on the prescription.
- » Check the prescription label to make sure it's correct.
- » Verify the drug is correct when getting refills.
- » Keep records of all your medications.

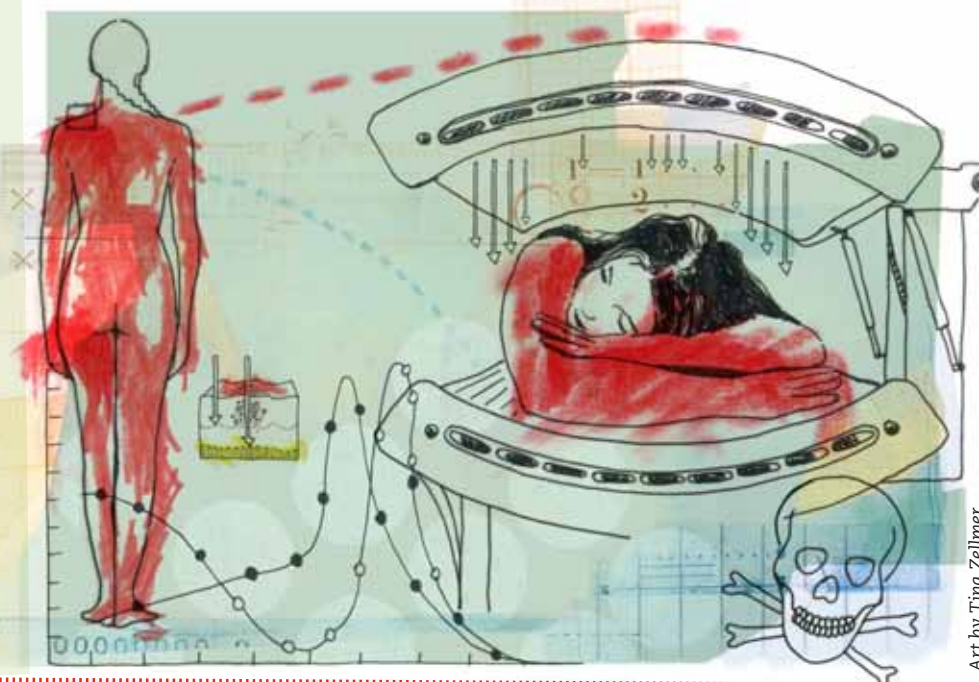
If your doctor e-prescribes your medication—sends it electronically to the pharmacy—that can also help reduce medication errors.

## Get Out of Bed

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has confirmed what many health experts have been saying for years: If you use tanning beds, you're putting your life at risk.

The IARC, which is part of the World Health Organization, said that people who start using tanning beds before the age of 30 increase their risk of melanoma by a staggering 75 percent because of overexposure to harmful ultraviolet rays. That's why they now classify tanning bed use as a "Group 1: carcinogenic to humans," which is their highest cancer-risk category. (For perspective, tobacco, arsenic, and mustard gas are also in Group 1.)

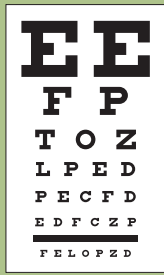
If you still crave the healthy glow of natural-looking bronze skin, the American Cancer Society recommends you try a sunless or self-tanning product. For more information on the risks of tanning and other cosmetic services, please see page 18.



Art by Tina Zellmer

# How Do You SEE It?

Our eyes can reveal a lot about us—how we feel, what we're thinking. A certain look can speak volumes. If it weren't for our vision, our experience of the world would be very, very different. But how much do you really know about your eyes? Take this quiz and see.



1. True or false? Women are almost seven times more likely to be color blind than men.



- a. True
- b. False

2. If you're over 40 and finding it hard to read without holding the page farther away from your eyes, you most likely have what eye condition?

- a. Myopia
- b. Presbyopia
- c. Astigmatism
- d. Hyperopia



4. What is the leading cause of blindness in adults aged 20-74 in the United States?

- a. Age-related macular degeneration
- b. Eye injuries
- c. Glaucoma
- d. Diabetic retinopathy



5. The most commonly performed surgical eye procedure corrects which vision problem?

- a. Corneal disease
- b. Cataracts
- c. Glaucoma
- d. Strabismus



6. True or false? Eating carrots is good for your eyesight.

- a. True
- b. False



3. Approximately how many Americans need some type of corrective lenses (either glasses or contact lenses)?

- a. 78 million
- b. 112 million
- c. 150 million
- d. 185 million

## answers ▼

1. **b.** False. About 8 percent of men in the United States are color blind, compared to 0.5 percent of women. Presbyopia usually begins in your early 40s and eventually affects virtually everyone to some degree. As you age, the lens, which normally changes shape to focus incoming light from objects, eventually gets rigid. This makes it impossible to see clearly up close.

2. **b.** Presbyopia usually begins in your early stages, which is why it's important to get yearly eye exams. Controlling blood sugar levels can reduce the risk of developing diabetic retinopathy.

3. **c.** More than 150 million Americans wear glasses or contact lenses.

4. **d.** One in four Americans has diabetes, and at least half of them will develop some degree of diabetic retinopathy. Diabetic retinopathy is caused by changes in the blood vessels of the retina that, if not treated, can lead to vision loss or blindness. There are usually no warning signs in the early stages, which is why it's important to get yearly eye exams. Controlling blood sugar levels can reduce the risk of developing diabetic retinopathy.

5. **b.** Cataracts affect nearly 22 million Americans aged 40 and older. Cataract surgery, which involves removing the clouded lens and replacing it with an artificial intra-ocular lens implant, has a proven track record for restoring vision.

6. **a.** True. Eating carrots and other foods high in beta carotene (which is converted to vitamin A)—such as other orange fruits and vegetables and dark, leafy green vegetables—are essential for maintaining good eye health. However, eating carrots can't actually improve your vision.

# Fuel Your Workouts

Everyone should eat a balanced diet that includes a variety of nutritious foods. And if you're working out vigorously on a regular basis, paying attention to what and when you eat can be helpful in reaching your exercise goals. Just follow these easy tips:



**Energize yourself** / Your body needs fuel to work properly, so make sure you feed it in the hours leading up to exercise. The best pre-workout meal is high in carbohydrates and easy to digest. Carbohydrates can be broken down easily by your body and converted into energy.



**Time it right** / Working out on a full stomach can slow you down and cause cramping, so wait three or four hours after a large meal before you head to the gym or out for a run. The closer you get to a workout, the smaller your meal or snack should be. If you exercise early in the morning, grab a piece of fruit or eat a small bowl of cereal before you go.



**Stay hydrated** / Drinking enough fluids is critical when you exercise. Water is typically all you'll need—unless your workout is particularly long or strenuous. If you exercise over an hour or so, a sports drink may be helpful. In any case, drink fluids throughout your workout.



**Refuel** / The best time to start preparing your body for your next workout is when you finish your current one. Again, replenishing your body with fluids is essential. Also, eating carbs and a little protein soon after intense exercise can help you bounce back. Eating too much, however, will cancel out the calories you just burned.



**Listen to your body** / The way your body reacts to food and exercise will help you determine if what you are doing is working. To get the best results, you may want to try different foods and mealtimes to find the right combination for you.

# The Flu: What to DO

## Learn how to help prevent both seasonal and H1N1 flu—and what to do if you become sick.

by Julie O'Connell

When it comes to the flu, most people want the answer to one big question: What can I do to protect myself and my family? These simple tips explain how to avoid both seasonal and H1N1 (swine) flu, and what to do if you get the flu.

### 1 Get vaccinated.

“A flu shot doesn't just help protect you from the flu. It also helps slow a flu outbreak because more people are immunized,” says Lee Ann Quinn, Manager of Infection Prevention and Control at South County Hospital in Rhode Island and head of Ocean State Adult Immunization Coalition. Anyone can—and should—get the seasonal flu vaccine, but (as of this writing) the H1N1 vaccine is only recommended for high-risk groups, including:

- Pregnant women
- Caregivers and household contacts of children younger than 6 months of age
- Children, adolescents, and young adults aged 6 months to 24 years
- Healthcare workers and first responders
- Adults aged 24 to 65 with chronic medical conditions

### 2 Wash the right way.

The flu is spread by infected droplets. So if you touch a surface that someone with the flu virus has touched (or coughed or sneezed on), you will have the virus on your hands. “If you touch your mouth or nose, you've introduced the virus into your body,” says Quinn. Washing your hands properly means using soap and warm, running water. Wash vigorously for at least 20 seconds, dry your hands with a paper towel, and then turn

off the water with the towel to prevent re-contamination. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used.

### 3 Sneeze into your elbow or sleeve (or use a tissue).

This helps keep the flu virus off your hands. Also, throw tissues in the trash after one use.

### 4 Know how long people are contagious.

People can infect others for up to a day before their symptoms start and five to seven days after they become ill. Quinn says children can be contagious for even longer than adults, up to 10 days.

### 5 Protect your immune system.

Take care of your overall health by eating nutritious foods, exercising regularly, sleeping at least seven hours each night, and managing stress.

### 6 Stay home until symptoms are gone for 24 hours.

“People with flu symptoms should stay home from work or school until their symptoms and fever are gone for 24 hours, without medication,” says Quinn. In fact, many schools and workplaces require that you stay home until you are symptom-free for at least a day. You should also stay out of public places unless it's absolutely necessary (for example, going to the doctor or pharmacy).

### 7 Know the difference between colds and flu.

“Colds don't usually result in the serious health problems we see with the flu,” says Quinn. “And the flu comes on much faster than a cold.” She says flu symptoms to watch for include high fever, body aches, a dry cough, sore throat, and being very tired.

### 8 Don't expect to tell the difference between flu.

The only definitive way to know whether you have seasonal or H1N1 flu is to be tested by your doctor, and your doctor will let you know if that is necessary. (In most cases, it isn't.) Quinn says some symptoms seem to be more common with H1N1 flu than seasonal flu: “People with H1N1 typically will have fever and complain about sore throat, and the sore throat might be a key. We've had younger people with H1N1 flu who also have diarrhea and vomiting, even though the flu doesn't usually hit the digestive tract.”

**9 Call your doctor if you're at high risk for complications.** Although some antiviral medications can help treat the flu, the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC) recommends that those drugs be used for people at high risk for complications, including children younger than 5, adults older than 65, pregnant women, and people with chronic conditions. According to the CDC, if too many people take antiviral medications, it could increase the risk that the virus would become resistant to the drugs. If you are at high risk and develop flu symptoms, be sure to call your doctor early on, because antivirals should be given within 48 hours of getting the flu. Most people do not need to call the doctor at all, and few need to be seen in the office or other healthcare facility unless they have more severe symptoms. (See tip 11.)

### 10 Drink lots of fluids.

Since the flu often results in a fever and sometimes a sore throat, becoming dehydrated is a serious risk of the flu. This is particularly true for young children, says Quinn. “Children lose body weight extremely fast, much faster than adults,” she says.

### 11 Know when to get emergency care.

See box at right to learn which signs indicate emergency care is needed. In addition to dehydration, the complications of flu include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure and diabetes.

## When to seek emergency medical care

These warning signs indicate that you (or someone you're caring for) needs emergency care.

### In children

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and a worse cough

### In adults

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and a worse cough

### More flu information on

choices  
on BCBSRI.com



- 15 ways to stop the spread of the flu in your home

- Links to the latest flu information

Please note: The information in this article was the most up-to-date at the time it was written. However, the situation with the flu is constantly changing, so please confirm any recommendations by visiting Flu News at BCBSRI.com or flu.gov for the latest information.

# THREE REASONS OUR NEW BUILDING IS HEALTHY FOR RHODE ISLAND.



## 1. A Healthy Economy

Our new address will keep more than a thousand people in downtown Providence every work day.

## 2. Healthy Savings

We'll save about \$25 million over the next 23 years — with no negative impact on your premiums or our reserves.

## 3. A Healthy Environment

The building is designed to reduce energy use, make the most of natural light, conserve water, and minimize the building's impact on the environment. We expect our efforts (and others too numerous to mention here) to earn at least silver-level certification from the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) green building certification system.



Our new building is located at:  
500 Exchange St., Providence, RI 02903

### centrally located

We're within walking distance of 26 bus lines and the Amtrak/MBTA station. Using mass transit helps reduce CO2 emissions.

### mechanical systems

Highly efficient systems will allow our building to outperform comparable structures by 21%.

### rainwater collection system

Harvested rainwater will be used in the building's cooling towers.

### electrical systems

We'll reduce our power consumption with occupancy sensors and consolidated printer and copier stations.

### green roofs

Vegetated roof areas reduce storm water runoff and ease the urban heat island effect.

### compost and recycling

Our composting and recycling stations greatly reduce the waste sent to landfills.

### fresh air

Air handling systems exceed code requirements for fresh air delivery, humidity control, filtration, and thermal comfort.

### curtain wall

High-performance insulated glass reduces solar gain in summer and keeps heat inside in winter. Daylight reaches 75% of regularly used spaces, and 90% of occupied spaces have exterior views.

### efficient water usage

We selected plumbing fixtures that will reduce water consumption by 30%.

### bicycle and preferred parking

We encourage alternate modes of transportation by offering preferred parking under the building for bicycles and hybrid cars.



# Acetaminophen: A Dose of Caution

This drug is the number one cause of liver failure in the United States. These four tips will help you use it safely.

by Tara Higgins, R.Ph.

If you're like most Americans, you've probably taken a drug that contains acetaminophen, which is the active ingredient found in many popular pain relievers, fever reducers, and cold and allergy medicines. And like most Americans, you probably don't realize that acetaminophen is the number one cause of liver failure in the United States.

When used correctly, acetaminophen is safe, but accidentally overdosing is all too easy.

According to the Federal Drug Administration (FDA), overdosing on acetaminophen sends nearly 56,000 Americans to the emergency room each year, resulting in more than 400 deaths annually. Here's what you can do to protect yourself and your family:

### 1. Check labels to make sure you're not taking more than one product with acetaminophen.

You should never take more than one drug containing acetaminophen, as you could exceed the recommended dosage and put your liver at risk. The FDA's

current maximum daily adult dose is 4,000 milligrams (although they may lower it).

Hundreds of over-the-counter (OTC) brands—including Tylenol®, Excedrin®, Nyquil®, TheraFlu®, Benadryl®, Midol®, and Alka-Seltzer®—contain acetaminophen, as do common “combination” prescriptions like Vicodin® (hydrocodone/acetaminophen) and Percocet® (oxycodone/acetaminophen). Billions of doses of products containing acetaminophen are purchased by consumers each year. That's why it's so important to check for acetaminophen under the “Active Ingredients” on the Drug Facts label of over-the-counter (OTC) drugs or to check the label of prescription drugs. If you have questions about whether a drug contains acetaminophen or whether certain drugs can be taken at the same time, always ask your doctor or pharmacist.

### 2. Never take more acetaminophen than directed.

Some people believe that it won't hurt to take an extra pill, or to not wait the recommended time between doses. But taking even a small amount more acetaminophen than directed can cause liver damage. Be sure that you understand:

- How much of the product containing acetaminophen that you can take at one time
- How many hours you must wait before taking another dose of acetaminophen
- How many doses you can safely take each day

- When to stop taking acetaminophen and ask a doctor for help

### 3. Talk to your doctor before taking acetaminophen if you have three or more drinks per day or if you have liver disease.

In these cases, taking even the recommended dose of acetaminophen could harm your liver. Your doctor may recommend a lower dose or that you avoid acetaminophen completely.

### 4. Never give children acetaminophen products meant for adults.

Acetaminophen is generally safe for children when they are given the recommended dose for their weight and height and when all instructions for the medicine are followed. Always use the measuring tool that comes with the medicine, not a spoon. Like adults, children should never be given more than one acetaminophen product at a time. ■

## Find out more

choices on BCBSRI.com

- ▶ Information on what an FDA advisory panel recommended to reduce acetaminophen overdoses
- ▶ A link to the FDA's Q&A on acetaminophen and liver damage



# 30-Minute Total Body Workout

Looking for a quick, effective workout? Then try these circuit training routines. »»

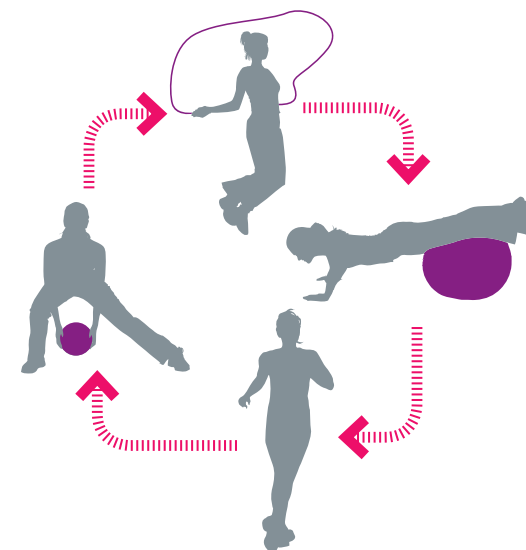
By Julie O'Connell



**You want to get the most from your workout. But you don't have a lot of time. And you don't want to spend a lot of money. If that sounds familiar, then circuit training might be your ideal workout. And here's a bonus—you don't even have to leave your house!**

## How circuit training works

Circuit training alternates short bursts of cardiovascular exercise (such as marching in place or jumping rope) with strength training (such as push-ups or squats). By keeping your heart rate up while doing strength training, you get two types of workouts in one.



## Here's how to get started

- ▶ **Check out our circuits on the next page.** Our two circuit training routines can be adapted to any fitness level.\* Each exercise includes a modification to make it less challenging. Plus, you can choose the cardio exercise that works best for your fitness level. For maximum results, do more than one type of cardio during each circuit.
- ▶ **Gather the equipment you want.** Most of the exercises in the circuit can be done without any equipment. However, if you do want to use equipment, you can use any or all of the following: weighted medicine ball, dumbbells, resistance band, stability ball, yoga mat, and step. *If you are a beginner, you'll get a terrific workout without any added resistance.*
- ▶ **Time it.** Do your cardio for 30 to 45 seconds, rest for 15 to 30 seconds, then do your strength training for 30 to 45 seconds. Continue alternating until you've done all exercises in one circuit, which takes about 15 minutes. For a 30-minute workout, do each cardio and strength training exercise two times. Do circuits I and II on different days.



As with any exercise program, it's a good idea to do different types of workouts. So you might want to do circuit training on some days, and other types of exercises (such as walking or yoga) on different days. »»

\*If you have a medical condition, please consult your doctor before starting a workout program.



## Circuit I

### 1 Cardio warm-up

3 to 5 minutes of low-intensity exercise to get your body moving. Only do once, on first time through circuit.

### 2 Squat, curl, and press



[WATCH ONLINE](#)

Stand with feet slightly wider than shoulders and hold a weighted ball (or dumbbell) in hands in front of ribcage, elbows bent. Squat as you lower ball between legs to within an inch of floor. Keep your weight on heels (don't let your knees extend beyond your toes) as you then stand up, curling ball to chest. Finish by pressing ball overhead; return to start.

**Muscles worked:** Legs, gluteals (buttocks), biceps, shoulders

**Modify it:** Do the exercise without pressing ball overhead, or without using the ball.

### 3 Cardio See options at right.

### 4 Push-up



Bend over ball, put hands on floor in push-up position (slightly wider than shoulder-width apart) and your feet (or lower legs) together on the ball. Maintain straight line between feet, hips, and shoulders. Draw in belly button and squeeze buttock muscles.

With back flat, slowly lower body toward floor, lowering and squeezing shoulder blades. Push up to starting position—do not lift or drop head or lower back.

**Muscles worked:** Chest, arms, abdominals

**Modify it:** Get in push-up position on knees without using ball.

### 5 Cardio

### 6 Staggered Row



Separate your legs so your right is in front and left is in back. Hold the dumbbell in your right hand, and bend forward while shifting your hips back. Keep your back straight and your chest up at all times. With your elbow leading, lift the dumbbell, bringing it up to your ribcage. Return slowly to the starting position. Do 15-20 seconds on each side.

**Muscles worked:** Back, biceps, legs

**Modify it:** Do without weights.

### 7 Cardio

### 8 Ball bridge



Lie on floor with stability ball under heels, arms out to sides, palms down. Keeping ball still and feet together, squeeze your buttocks to lift hips so body is aligned from head to heels. Lower hips close to floor.

**Muscles worked:** Lower back, gluteals, hamstrings (back of thighs)

**Modify it:** Move ball closer to knees rather than under heels.

### 9 Start again, or cool down and stretch.

## CHOOSE YOUR CARDIO

#### ► Low-impact

- March in place.
- Walk up and down on a step.
- Walk on a treadmill.
- Use an elliptical machine.

#### ► High-impact

- Do jumping jacks.
- Jump rope.
- Run in place or on a treadmill.
- Run up and down on a step.
- Hit a punching bag.



## Circuit II

### 1 Cardio warm-up

3 to 5 minutes of low-intensity exercise to get your body moving. Only do once, on first time through circuit.

### 2 Lateral lunge reach and press



[WATCH ONLINE](#)

Stand with feet hip-width apart, holding medicine ball (or dumbbell) in hands in front of rib cage, elbows bent. Step right foot wide to right—keeping toes forward—and reach ball to right foot. Bring feet together; press ball overhead. Repeat to left; alternate sides.

**Muscles worked:** Legs, gluteals, shoulders

**Modify it:** Do the same movement without the ball or dumbbells.

### 3 Cardio See options at left.

### 4 Rotation



Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, holding weighted ball (or dumbbell) in front of rib cage, elbows bent. Keeping abs tight and shoulders and arms still, pivot on ball of right foot and twist torso and hips to left; left foot doesn't move. Moving back to starting position. Then repeat to right (pivot on ball of left foot). Continue, alternating sides quickly.

**Muscles worked:** Abdominals

**Modify it:** Do the same movement without the ball.

## KEEP IT MOVING

Visit [choices](#) on BCBSRI.com for:

- A third circuit training routine
- [Videos of exercises](#)

### 5 Cardio

### 6 Triceps dips



[WATCH ONLINE](#)

Start by putting the back of a chair against a wall or using a chair that will not move. (You can also use an aerobic step as shown.) Place hands firmly on the edge of the seat, so that knuckles are pointing forward. Bend the knees in front. Make sure the shoulders stay down and back, and the elbows stay close to your side. Slowly bend elbows into a 90-degree angle, keeping your back straight and near the chair. Pause, and return to starting position, putting the pressure on the heels of the hands.

**Muscles worked:** Chest, triceps, abdominals

**Modify it:** Use a step or a chair that is lower to the ground.

### 7 Cardio

### 8 Plank



Lie facedown on mat resting on the forearms. Push off the floor, raising up onto toes and resting on the elbows. Keep your back flat, in a straight line from head to heels. Tilt your pelvis and contract your abdominals to prevent your buttocks from sticking up in the air. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.

**Muscles worked:** Abdominals, lower back

**Modify it:** Do the same plank with your knees bent.

### 9 Start again, or cool down and stretch. ■

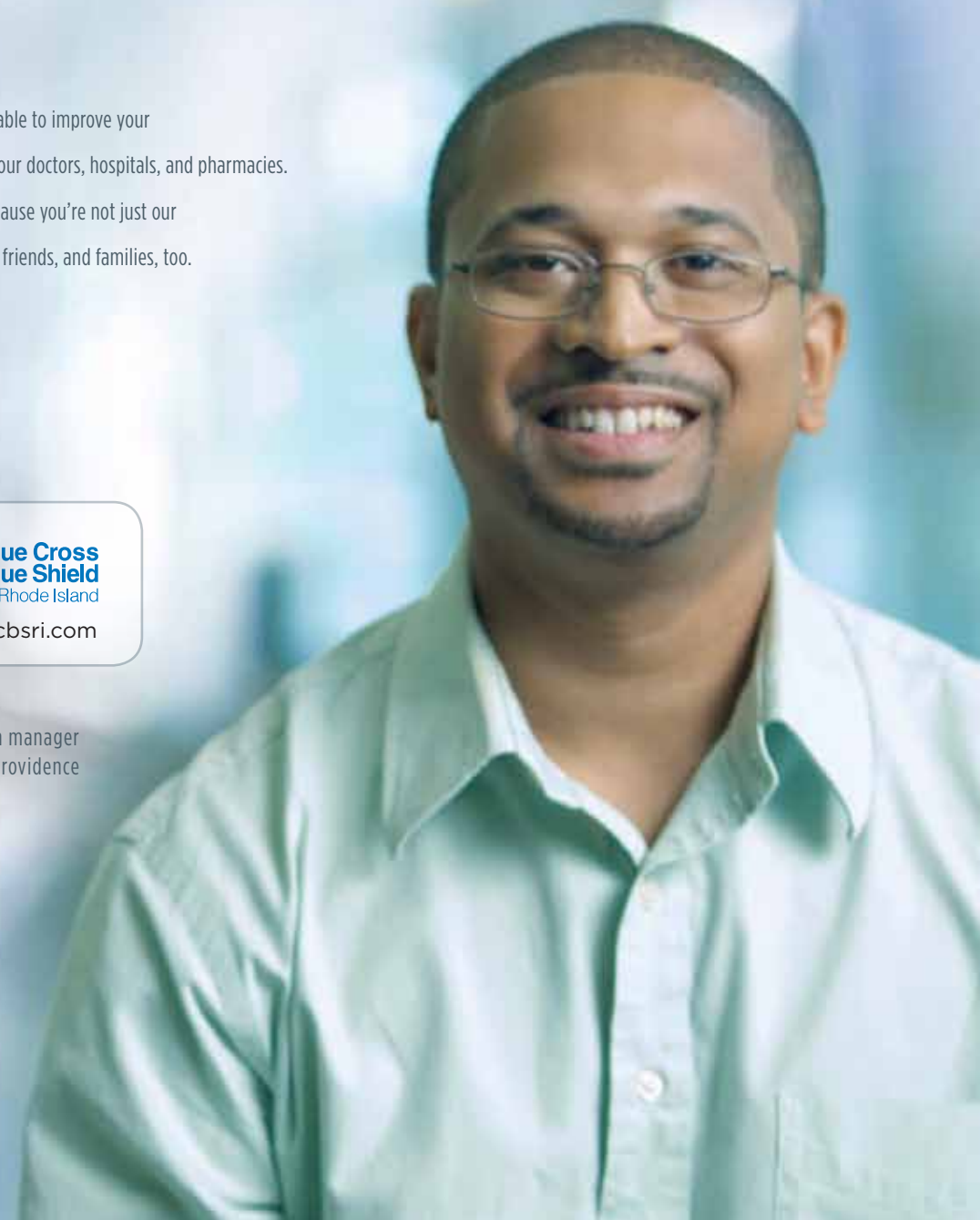
# “YOU’LL FEEL BETTER BECAUSE WE’RE HERE.”

Our local presence means we’re uniquely able to improve your health and healthcare. We know your doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies. We know your neighborhood. We care because you’re not just our members — you’re our neighbors, friends, and families, too.



Darrell – diversity program manager  
hometown: East Providence

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.



By Peter  
Hollmann, M.D.

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

### Dear Dr. Hollmann,

Is it possible to experience side effects from a drug after going off it? My mother was on Prednisone for a respiratory infection and broke out in hives the day after she went off it. (Hives are a possible side effect of the drug.) Or could that happen because of withdrawal from the drug? If you are going to get a drug rash, it typically occurs while you are on the drug and begins within three weeks of starting the medication. Oddly enough, however, one can get a drug rash after a drug is discontinued. When that occurs, it usually happens within two weeks of the last use of the drug. Having said that, determining the underlying cause of hives is often extremely difficult—if even possible. Quite likely, your mother’s hives were not a consequence of discontinuing the medication. If they continue to occur, please have her contact her doctor.

### Dear Dr. Hollmann,

I’m at the age when I need a colonoscopy, and my doctor gave me the choice between a traditional and a virtual colonoscopy. I’d rather have the virtual one. What do you think? The biggest issue with colorectal cancer screening is not determining which test should be performed, but that too many individuals do not have any test performed at all. Less than half of adults over 50 have had a test within the recommended time frames. However, you’ve hit upon a pretty hotly debated subject with new information coming in all the time.

To answer your question, we must first establish that we are talking about a screening for a person with average risk of colon cancer. If the test is being performed on a higher risk person or used as a diagnostic tool (for example,

to evaluate a symptom), the issues to consider might change.

For those who may not be familiar with the differences between the screenings, here’s a definition of each. A “virtual colonoscopy” is a CT (computed tomography) scan where the images are reconstructed on a computer to create a 3-D image that visually simulates a colonoscopy. A traditional colonoscopy is done with a flexible tube with channels through which biopsy forceps and other tiny surgical instruments can be passed. It uses fiber-optics and a camera to show the colon’s interior lining where polyps and cancers may lurk.

When choosing between a traditional and a virtual colonoscopy, the main factors to consider are the ability of the tests to find a cancer or pre-cancerous polyp, the risks of the tests, and the cost effectiveness of the tests. Patient preferences also matter.

Both colonoscopy methods are fairly good at finding cancers or polyps that may become cancers. Neither is perfect, but both methods are getting better. Traditional colonoscopy has the edge and the longer track record, however.

Both tests are safe. Perforation of the intestine or bleeding can occur with either, but is very rare in a screening test (as compared to an emergency colonoscopy). Both procedures require an extensive clean out of the colon with laxatives beforehand. Either can be done with or without sedation, but the virtual colonoscopy is usually performed without sedation, while the traditional colonoscopy is usually done with it. When conducting a cost benefit analysis of the two procedures using typical costs, the better buy for society is the traditional colonoscopy. Meanwhile, patient preference varies, and there are no clear trends.

It’s important to note that a virtual colonoscopy can only detect abnormalities, like a mammogram does for breast cancer. We think a lot of cancers begin as polyps. During a traditional colonoscopy, any polyps found can be removed and sent to the lab. So, traditional colonoscopy is both a test and a treatment (potentially). It does not just detect cancer, but may help prevent it as well.

Although I’m not your doctor, I’ll say what I tell my patients when I recommend the traditional colonoscopy. It has a great history of success, while virtual colonoscopy is pretty new and not done well by everyone yet. And—here’s the clincher—if a virtual colonoscopy finds something, you have to have a traditional colonoscopy performed. Getting the job done the first time seems preferable to me. But, whatever you and your doctor decide, get your screening. A life lost to colon cancer is a mostly preventable tragedy. ■

**Got a question?** E-mail your health question to [choices@bcbsri.org](mailto: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  
500 Exchange Street  
Providence, RI 02903

# The Secrets of Spa Safety

Spa services aren't always as safe as you think. Here's how to protect yourself.

by Mary Barlow



Compared with the abundance of information promoting spa services to make you feel more relaxed, more attractive, pampered, and of course, younger, there's little out there to tell you about their safety. Many of these services\* require special training to administer or should be done only by physicians. And some should be completely avoided.

"I think it's just a lot of cases of buyer beware," says Bruce Katz, M.D. "People have to have a good healthy skepticism that those performing the service are properly trained and have experience with the device that they are using." Dr. Katz is the Clinical Professor of Dermatology at The Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Director of the Cosmetic Surgery & Laser Clinic at Mount Sinai Medial Center, and Director of the Juva Skin & Laser Center in New York.

In your quest to be more beautiful or well groomed, here are some tips for staying safe along the way. (Please see "Clean & Competent" on next page for information that applies to all services.)

## ! MUCH CAUTION

**Manicure/Pedicure.** The greatest risk here is of infection, especially for the feet since they spend so much time in shoes—bacteria grow better where it's warm and dark.

To reduce your risk of infection, don't shave within a day of a pedicure, wait for any cuts or wounds to heal before getting a manicure/pedicure, and have your cuticles pushed back rather than removed. Consider bringing your own instruments to be sure they're always clean. Just boil them between uses.

It's also important to make sure there's adequate ventilation. If the place smells like an auto body shop, find another salon.



## ! CAUTION

**Facials.** According to Dr. Katz, as long as the service is performed in a clean environment by a properly trained technician, a facial is a pretty low-risk service. Next to cleanliness, the most important consideration is to be sure you are not allergic to any of the ingredients applied to your skin, he notes. If you have allergies, ask what's in the products ahead of time. The same is true of body wraps.

## ! MUCH CAUTION

**Waxing.** Waxing should not be done on people with diabetes or those with thin or fragile skin since it can easily tear skin, causing injury. Waxing also shouldn't be done over varicose veins, moles, or warts or if the skin is chapped, sunburned, or otherwise irritated. To reduce the risk of burns, ask the technician to check the temperature of the wax before applying it to your skin.

## ! EXTREME CAUTION

**LASER hair removal.** LASER (Light Amplified by Stimulated Emission of Radiation) is a powerful light therapy that is used for everything from shrinking tumors to tightening the skin for cosmetic purposes. There are a number of LASER types, each used for a different purpose. The one used for hair removal destroys the hair's growth at the cellular level.

LASER is a powerful device that should only be administered by well-trained and experienced technicians and physicians. In fact, in some states—like New Jersey—only a medical doctor can

legally perform LASER hair removal. And it's important to understand why: Risks include burning, scarring, changes to skin color (especially darker skin), and permanent damage to the eyes, including blindness. Even those outside the treatment room can be hurt if the LASER is allowed to reflect into those areas through a window or door.

If you are considering LASER hair removal, read as much about it as you can ahead of time, and choose a well-trained, licensed expert. Be sure that the person treating you provides protective eyewear, and never have LASER hair removal performed around your eye area or eyebrows.

## ! COMPLETELY AVOID

**Tanning.** "Indoor tanning is a definite no no," says Dr. Katz. "Due to the risk of melanoma, it should be avoided."

The largest factor in your potential to develop skin cancer is your exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Since UV radiation in indoor tanning devices is 15 times greater than what you'd get outdoors on a sunny day, indoor tanning greatly increases your risk of developing melanoma, which is the deadliest form of skin cancer. It also causes premature wrinkling. If you'd like to look tanned, it's safer to use a sunless tanning product. To learn more about the dangers of indoor tanning, please see page 5.



**EXTREME CAUTION**

**Permanent makeup.** Permanent makeup is applied by tattooing pigments into the skin. Some people choose permanent makeup because they can't see well enough to apply makeup or because they have a disability that makes it difficult to do. Permanent makeup is also used as part of some reconstructive procedures, including total breast reconstruction.

If you're considering getting permanent makeup to save time, it probably isn't a good idea. The greatest risk is of infection, which can occur years after the makeup is applied.

After that, you should consider that the inks aren't regulated by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration—some of them include industrial grades, which could be used in printers and car paint.

And if you decide you don't like it later, removal is painful, and often requires multiple visits, even using the latest laser technology. Another problem is that permanent makeup (and tattoos) can interfere with the readability of MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging). After having MRIs, some people have also reported swelling or burning in the area where their tattoo is.



**MUCH CAUTION**

**Microdermabrasion.** This includes a number of techniques to remove the uppermost layer of the skin on the face for a smoother appearance. Besides infection, you could also experience injury if the treatment isn't done properly. Keep in mind that this service is highly unregulated by the government. That's why, if you're considering microdermabrasion, it would be best to have it done by your dermatologist rather than a salon technician.

**COMPLETELY AVOID**

**Ear candling (coning).** Ear candling is downright dangerous, with scores of people reporting burns. So it should be completely avoided. As part of ear candling, the provider places the cone-shaped end of a candle-like tube in your ear, lights the opposite end, and allows it to burn for about 15 minutes. After the tube is removed, a stick is inserted into the tube to push out the debris inside it. It's claimed that this debris has been cleared from your ear, sinuses, and even your brain! However, studies have proved that the debris collected inside the tube is only from the candle, not the ear or any other body part. If you think your ears need to be professionally cleaned, it's best to contact a licensed physician. ■

\*Please note: Services performed for cosmetic reasons are not covered by health insurance.

**Clean & Competent**

No matter what type of spa service you're considering, it's important that it's performed in a clean setting by a qualified person:

- The place of service should look clean, and you should observe employees washing their hands, sterilizing all instruments, and throwing out any disposable items after each use. Clean towels should be used for each patron, and any surfaces should be disinfected between services. This is important since many spa services increase your risk of infection.

- Make sure the salon or spa is properly licensed and that the technician or doctor is qualified to perform the service. Some services can only be performed by a medical doctor, while others can be done by technicians or those working under a doctor's supervision.

You can find out what licensing and cleaning regimens are required by checking with your state's Board of Cosmetology or Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation. The salon or spa should also display licenses where patrons can see them.

**LEGEND**



**CAUTION**  
Try to find the best salon in your area for this service by asking friends for recommendations.



**MUCH CAUTION**  
Research to find the best salon or spa in your area that provides this service. Pay attention to what the technician is doing, and be sure to ask questions if something doesn't seem right.



**EXTREME CAUTION**  
Do lots of research on both the service and where to have it done beforehand. Read information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U. S. Food and Drug Administration.



**COMPLETELY AVOID**  
Avoid this service completely. The risks of injury far outweigh any benefits.

# Improve Your Dental IQ

Get the answers to three common questions about dental health.



Does your jaw ache when you get up in the morning? Do your gums bleed when you brush? Dr. Diane Monti-Markowski, Executive Director of Blue Cross Dental, sheds some light on what may be happening—and what you can do about it—with answers to questions about teeth grinding and gum disease. She also explains what steps you should take in the moments after a tooth is knocked out.

**What can someone do if they grind their teeth while sleeping?**

First, a little bit about teeth grinding (or bruxism as it is called). Teeth grinding wears away healthy enamel that will never grow back. As a result, it can cause permanent damage to your teeth. Sometimes patients are unaware that they're doing it because they don't feel any pain. Other patients may get joint pain or muscular pain from grinding their teeth. It's often done unconsciously as a stress-reliever, and may occur at night during sleep. Your dentist can determine if you're grinding your teeth through an examination.

If you're grinding your teeth while sleeping, the treatment of choice is to wear a nightguard (or mouthguard) at night, which can be custom-made for you at your dentist's office. A nightguard is a U-shaped appliance made of plastic that fits over the teeth and protects your healthy enamel from wear as you grind your teeth.

Nightguards need to be replaced periodically depending on the severity of the grinding.

**What is gum disease and how can it be prevented?**

Gum disease occurs in two stages. The first is gingivitis, or gum inflammation. If it is not taken care of, gingivitis can progress to periodontitis, which is more severe. Periodontitis can cause permanent damage to your teeth and gums, including bone loss.



A warning sign that you may have gum disease is bleeding of your gums when you brush or floss. You may have pain, but you may not. Your dentist can also check X-rays to see where your bone level is in relation to your gums because that can sometimes provide evidence of gum disease as well. Your dentist will measure the space between the top of your gum and where it attaches to your tooth with a probe. If that space is deeper than 3 mm, you may have a "periodontal pocket." This can lead to severe gum disease because the pocket's depth makes it too difficult to clean. Plaque will accumulate in the pocket and begin to erode the bone around the teeth.

To prevent gum disease, it's recommended that you brush your teeth at least twice a day and floss one to two times a day. The most important times to brush and floss are in the morning and at night before bed. Professional dental visits are also critical to make sure you get regular cleanings and have X-rays taken.

**What is the best course of action if a permanent tooth is knocked out?**

After you retrieve the tooth, put it in a cup of milk. If milk is not available, sterile saline (salt water) is the next best choice, followed by tap water. You don't want to scrape the tooth or rinse it vigorously because there are cells that live on it that you want to leave intact.

Call the dentist right away (even if it's after office hours), and try to get into the dental office as soon as possible. If you can get the tooth re-implanted within an hour, you have the best chance of success.

Tooth injuries often occur when playing sports. To help prevent them from happening, be sure to wear a mouthguard when you're out on the field or court. ■



Here's where you can learn more about staying safe at the spa:

- > **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** [cdc.org](http://cdc.org)
- > **U.S. Food & Drug Administration** [fda.gov](http://fda.gov)
- > **The International Pedicure Association** [pedicureassociation.org](http://pedicureassociation.org)



# The Impact of Head Trauma

Two doctors explain what you should know about traumatic brain injuries.

by Peter Gallant

Most people associate the terms “brain injury” and “head trauma” with major car accidents, violent assaults, or war—not with bumping their heads on an open kitchen cabinet door, seeing stars after being tackled in a high school football game, or taking a seemingly harmless tumble on the ski slopes. That is, until recently.

“After the Natasha Richardson tragedy, and the coverage it received, we did see a huge spike in the number of visits to the ER for head injuries,” says Elizabeth Jacobs, M.D., Assistant Professor of Pediatric Emergency Medicine at Hasbro Children’s Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island.

As was widely reported, the actress died in March of 2009 of a traumatic brain injury (TBI) sustained from a seemingly minor fall during a beginner’s skiing lesson. Ms. Richardson, who was not wearing a helmet, didn’t show any visible signs of injury after the fall and refused medical help because she said she felt fine.

Ms. Richardson’s official cause of death was listed as “epidural hematoma due to a blunt impact to the head,” which refers to a buildup of blood between the brain and the skull. More practically, however, her death may have been the result of Ms. Richardson, and those around her, simply not being aware of how injured she really was.

## ● Signs of a problem

Although cases such as Ms. Richardson’s are rare, it isn’t unusual for head trauma to go undetected. “People don’t always know what to look for because the signs can be subtle and delayed,” says Neha P. Raukar, M.D., M.S., Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine and Sports Medicine, Warren Alpert School of Medicine, Brown University.

For example, lethargy is one sign. But after a long day on the slopes, noticing that a friend who fell earlier in the day is fatigued probably doesn’t raise a red flag. “They may think ‘He seems overly tired, but he did ski all day, so maybe it’s OK,’” Dr. Raukar says. “They may be correct in their thinking, but not necessarily.”

Other signs of possible TBI include:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision
- Confusion
- Irritability
- Unsteady gait
- Vomiting
- Insomnia
- Mood changes

If you or someone you know exhibits any of these signs after receiving a blow to the head, seek medical attention. “Also, if someone has, say, a persistent headache

## Prevention is still the best medicine

Here are several tips to minimize your risk of head injury—or avoid it altogether.

**Wear a properly fitting safety helmet** when you engage in any sport or activity where contact or potential harm is present.

**Always buckle up** when you’re driving or riding in a car, and obey all laws.

**Follow proper safety procedures** when doing home improvements and everyday tasks.

**Use caution** when walking on icy or uneven surfaces. This is especially relevant for older adults whose balance may already be compromised.

**Avoid unhealthy behaviors** that can impair judgment and increase your chances of falling or harm, such as drugs and excessive drinking.

**Reduce the risk of another head injury** if you’ve already experienced one. For example, if you play sports and get hit on the head, your doctor may recommend days or weeks of not playing to reduce the chance of re-injury.

after the event, it’s a mistake to take pain relief medicine until it goes away,” Dr. Raukar says. “That only masks the problem, which is dangerous. If the headache doesn’t go away or gets worse after taking over-the-counter medication, it’s time to at least start thinking that something else may be going on, especially if other symptoms of head trauma exist.”

## ● Types of head injuries

Each head injury, experts say, is as unique and individual as the victim who suffers it, and not every blow to the head is a TBI. Still, having a basic understanding of what a head injury is will make you more aware of what to look for if you or someone you know experiences a blow to the head.

“Head trauma is really any impact to the head that disrupts normal brain function,” Dr. Jacobs explains, “and can result in—among other things—confusion, amnesia, loss of consciousness, intracranial bleeding, or skull fractures.” In essence, when the trauma occurs, the connections between neurons, which are the nerve cells that send impulses to the brain, are adversely altered, temporarily or permanently.

The effects of head injuries can vary widely. The important thing to remember is that even without losing consciousness, the person could have experienced a severe head injury.

For severe concussions, the victim displays a wide variety of symptoms, including confusion, fogginess, and nausea, and the effects can be far

reaching. This type of injury can be a lifelong condition, and those individuals may need help to perform daily activities.

## ● Don’t take chances

Falls, motor vehicle accidents, sports- and recreational-related events, and assaults are the most common causes of head injuries. But everyday activities like cleaning gutters, repairing roofs, and cutting trees also account for many emergency rooms visits—as does sledding. “There’s no helmet law for sledding,” Dr. Raukar says, “so when these kids hit a tree—at the speeds they’re going—it’s like being in a car accident.” And they might not tell you about it.

“Often, parents will bring a teenager in who’s been complaining of a headache or has been vomiting,” Dr. Jacobs explains. “We’ll ask the teen if he’s hit his head in the last 24 hours and when he says ‘yes,’ you should see the shocked looks on his parents’ faces.” Dr. Jacobs says teens are often reluctant to tell parents or coaches about their “head hurting” because they don’t want to admit they were skateboarding without a helmet or because they don’t want to be taken out of the game.

Dr. Raukar adds, “This is an unfortunate phenomenon, especially in athletes. An athlete may have hit their head but will shake it off because they want to keep playing. Therein lies the danger.” She says, “Parents and coaches have to be vigilant and explain that it’s not a sign of weakness to come out of a game because an athlete hit their head. Teenagers need to understand this.” ■

# When DAIRY does You Wrong



Lactose intolerance is a very common condition. Learn how you can live well with it.

by Beth Adamo

For most of her life, Danielle, 51, drank a glass of milk three times a day with her meals. “I was fine for years and years,” she says, “and then when I was about 40, it just started—the lactose intolerance.”

Lactose intolerance is the inability to digest foods that contain lactose, the sugar in cow’s milk and other dairy products. “It’s a complicated process where lactose, or milk sugar, is broken down into two different molecules—glucose and galactose—by an intestinal enzyme called lactase,” says Christy Dibble, D.O., Center for Women’s Gastroenterology Disorders, Women & Infants’ Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island. People who are lactose intolerant do not have sufficient amounts of lactase to break down lactose. “When we talk of lactose intolerance, we really mean lactose malabsorption,” says Dr. Dibble. “If it can’t be broken down appropriately, it can’t be absorbed.” Having that unabsorbed sugar in the intestinal tract is what leads to the symptoms.

## A common condition

Approximately 30 to 50 million Americans have some degree of lactose intolerance. Worldwide, lactose intolerance is more the norm than the exception, with almost 75 percent of the world’s population having some decrease in the production of the lactase enzyme during adulthood.

“In some ethnic and racial populations, there’s a much higher incidence of lactose malabsorption,” says Dr. Dibble. The highest incidence is among people of Native American, African, and Asian descent. About 65 to 70 percent of Hispanics and people of southern European descent also are lactose intolerant. The condition is less common among people of northern European descent (only about 5 percent). According to a Cornell University study, those populations that developed the ability to digest lactose are from regions where dairy herds could be raised safely and economically. In places of extreme heat or cold, this was not possible, so people simply stopped producing the lactase enzyme after weaning.

Low intestinal lactase levels can also be caused by injury to the cells that secrete the enzyme that digests lactose. This can be very common with many people experiencing temporary lactose

intolerance after a viral infection of the intestines. In addition, “there are rare developmental processes that cause lactase deficiency, and we can see these in premature infants,” says Dr. Dibble. “Apparently the ability to form that enzyme isn’t fully mature until infants are over 32 weeks gestation.”

## Symptoms and diagnosis

Danielle’s symptoms included extreme bloating, gas, and diarrhea. “The pain was unbelievable,” she says. “But, it was

Not the only milk in town



If you’re looking for satisfying milk alternatives, try any of these lactose-free milks:

- ▶ Soy
- ▶ Rice
- ▶ Almond
- ▶ Oat
- ▶ Hemp
- ▶ Peanut

When selecting an alternative milk product, read the nutritional label and avoid products that contain a lot of added sugar. These plant-based milks are becoming more widely available in grocery stores, or you can easily make your own.

Find out how by visiting

**choices** on [BCBSRI.com](http://BCBSRI.com)

obvious to me that it was lactose intolerance because my mother had it also,” she says. According to Dr. Dibble, symptoms like Danielle’s are common. “What happens is the lactose molecules sit in the colon and are impacted by bacteria and become hydrogen gas,” says Dr. Dibble. That gas is what causes the bloating, flatulence, cramping, and diarrhea.

Because these symptoms are common to a number of other conditions, including irritable bowel syndrome and Crohn’s disease, it’s important to see your doctor

to get an accurate diagnosis. Testing for lactose intolerance is done with a lactose breath hydrogen test, which measures the level of lactose malabsorption. “It’s a simple, noninvasive, and very sensitive test,” says Dr. Dibble.

## Living with lactose intolerance

Lactose intolerance is not life threatening, but it can be challenging. “I don’t put anything in my mouth anymore without thinking, ‘What’s in it?’” says Danielle. “You just have to stay vigilant—reading package labels and asking about ingredients when eating out.” Fortunately, there are a variety of ways to manage living with lactose intolerance. Danielle manages her condition by taking replacement lactase enzyme supplements before eating any dairy products. She also buys lactose-free milk, cheese, and ice cream whenever possible.

Dr. Dibble recommends taking lactose-containing probiotics, which include many of the live active cultures found in yogurt. “Also, consuming small, frequent amounts of lactose is fairly well tolerated by most patients, because the bacterial flora in the colon will actually propagate, aid in digestion, and become more tolerant,” she adds.

Another reasonable approach is to avoid milk and dairy, making sure to get enough protein, calcium, vitamin A, and vitamin D through other nutritional sources. “There are so many wonderful foods that are rich in calcium, such as dark, leafy greens, broccoli, nuts, sesame, fish, avocados, and fruits such as figs and prunes,” says Hannah Marcotti, Nutritional Health Counselor.

Your body cannot absorb calcium without vitamin D, which is added to milk after the pasteurization process. Food sources of vitamin D include salmon, mackerel, and tuna, as well as some brands of orange juice. If you think you’re not getting enough vitamin D, talk to your doctor at your next checkup.

The amount of lactose that can be tolerated varies considerably from person to person. The key is finding what works best for you. ■

# Warm Up to Crock Pots

by Joseph Rotella

Make three comforting meals with little effort.

At the end of a long, cold day, wouldn't it be nice to get home to find that a hot, comforting meal has already "made itself"? That's the beauty of a crock pot. It couldn't be easier to use, usually requiring little to no preparation—just add the ingredients, turn it on, and walk away! It's a versatile cooking tool for all types of dishes. Here are a few to try this winter.



Photos by Chris Vaccaro



## Beef Stew

Serves 8

- 2 lbs. lean stew beef
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. pepper
- 2 cups low-sodium beef broth
- 1 clove of garlic
- 1 bay leaf (optional)
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 4 carrots, peeled and sliced

- 3 potatoes, peeled and chopped into 1-inch cubes
  - 2 medium onions, chopped
  - 1 stalk of celery
  - ½ cup of uncooked barley
- Mix flour, salt, and pepper. Stir into remaining ingredients (except barley) and add to crock pot. In last hour, add barley. Cook on low for 6 to 8 hours.

## Web extra

Enjoy these recipes? Visit [choices](#) on BCBSRI.com for two more crock pot recipes:



Italian Vegetable Soup



Pulled Chicken with Vegetables



## Vegetarian Chili

Serves 6-8

- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 large red peppers, chopped
- 1 cup zucchini, grated
- 2 15½ oz. cans no-sodium kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 cups grated carrots
- 6 oz. can tomato paste
- 1 cup water
- 1 large granny smith apple, peeled, cored and chopped
- 1 tsp. cumin
- ½ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

Sauté onion, garlic, and peppers in olive oil over medium heat. Put in crock pot along with all other ingredients. Cook on low heat for 4 to 5 hours. Top each serving with reduced fat cheddar cheese if desired.

## 6 tips for food safety

1. If you cut up meat and vegetables in advance, store them separately in the refrigerator.
2. Always thaw meat or poultry before putting it in a crock pot.
3. Fill the crock pot no less than half full and no more than two-thirds full.
4. Keep on low if you are leaving the house.
5. Remove the lid only to stir the food or check for doneness.
6. Don't reheat leftovers in a crock pot.



## Herbed Chicken

Serves 8

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 leek, white part only, sliced
- 1 8 oz. package baby bella mushrooms, sliced
- 1 8 oz. pkg. baby carrots
- 3 medium red potatoes, cut into chunks
- 2 lbs. skinless chicken tenders

- 1 15 oz. can crushed tomatoes
  - ¾ cup low-sodium chicken broth
  - ¼ tsp. fresh thyme
  - 1 sprig rosemary
  - Salt and pepper to taste
- Coat bottom and sides of crock pot with cooking spray (olive oil spray if you have it). Place vegetables in the crock pot. Add chicken, followed by herbs, tomatoes, and chicken broth. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 9 hours.

# Your Choices

## MEN

### The Soy Story

Soy is a great alternative to a wide variety of common foods, such as meat, milk, and nuts. However, many men avoid soy because they've heard it can lower their sperm count and reduce their testosterone levels. These stories started because soy contains isoflavones, a substance that can produce estrogen-like effects.

Put your fears to rest—eating about a third of a cup per day of soy and soy-based products can actually have significant benefits for men. That's because soy:

- » Is a high-quality protein source.
- » Is a good source of folic acid and fiber, "good" fats, and antioxidants.
- » Is low in calories and fat.



### Tackle the Fat

The big game isn't far away. Unfortunately, so are lots of extra calories and fat, if you're planning your "usual" football party menu. This year, sack some fat and calories with healthier alternatives that still tackle the hungriest appetite.

- » **Watch the salt.** Rather than snacking on handfuls of salty snacks like potato chips and nachos, offer air-popped popcorn or baked chips.
- » **Flip the dip.** Use reduced-fat cheese or sour cream, or light mayonnaise. Or low-fat or fat-free yogurt in place of mayo. This will cut your calories almost in half, and help you keep the flavor, not the fat.
- » **Try a new pie.** Pizza is a football party staple, but packs a calorie-laden wallop (about 600 in two slices). Switch to thin crust, lose the meat toppings, and add lots of veggies to trim the calories by 50 percent.



- » **Unload the potatoes.** Potato skins are a fan favorite, but they're loaded with calories and fat. Bake or grill them (limit the butter), and top with reduced-fat versions of sour cream and cheese. Or better yet, toss sliced sweet potatoes with a little bit of olive oil and bake them.
- » **Do the beer minimum.** If you're going to drink beer, why not save some calories and drink a light beer instead? Also, if you're having more than one, have something non-alcoholic in between, like a glass of water. The more alcohol you drink, the more mindless eating you're likely to do.

### 5 Ways to Get Active This Winter

1. Go snowshoeing.
2. Exercise while watching TV.
3. Take a walk.
4. Do yoga.
5. Join an intramural sports team.



### Couple Your Efforts

With a new year upon us, many people are looking to shed some holiday weight. But don't go it alone. Dieting and exercising can produce better results when you have the support and participation of your spouse or significant other. Even if only one of you is actually dieting, the other is more likely to adopt the same healthy habits, and you may both lose weight. A University of Connecticut study found that spouses of people who began a diet and exercise program (the spouses were not doing the same program) lost an average of five pounds over the year of the study.



# Your Choices

## WOMEN

### How to Reduce Your Breast Cancer Risk



Almost 40 percent of breast cancer cases in the United States could be prevented with simple everyday changes, according to a September 2009 study by the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR).

The study found that women can reduce their risk for breast cancer by maintaining a healthy weight, being physically active, drinking less alcohol, and breastfeeding their children. Specifically, the AICR recommends:

- » Being as lean as possible without becoming underweight.
- » Being physically active for at least 30 minutes every day.
- » Limiting alcohol consumption to one drink a day, if you drink.
- » That mothers breastfeed exclusively for up to six months and then add other liquids and foods.

### The Pap Test: Explained





So you know that Pap tests (also called Pap smears) are a part of regular preventive care for women. But you might not know exactly what a Pap test is, and why they're so important.

A Pap test checks for changes in the cells of your cervix, which is the lower part of your uterus that opens into the vagina. The Pap test can tell if you have an infection, abnormal cervical cells, or cervical cancer.

Having regular Pap tests is the best thing you can do to prevent death or disability from cervical cancer. That's because a Pap test can find cervical cancer in its earliest and most treatable stages. All women who are sexually active or over age 21 need Pap tests. Women under 30 need them annually. After age 30, you may need Pap tests every year or every few years, depending on your health history. Talk to your doctor about what's right for you. While the new cervical cancer vaccine will hopefully prevent cancer, checkups and Pap smears are still recommended.



### 4 Winter Fruits to Try

<b>Feijoa</b>		This egg-shaped fruit has a thin lime-green skin and cream-colored flesh with a jelly-like center. The feijoa's texture is similar to a pear, though it tastes like a combination of pineapple, guava, and strawberry. It should be peeled and eaten raw.	Vitamin C, folate
<b>Red banana</b>		Smaller than a regular banana, this fruit has a deep red or purple peel. The flesh of the red banana is creamy white to pink, with a slight raspberry-banana flavor. A red banana can be used in recipes in place of a regular banana.	Vitamin C, vitamin B6, fiber, potassium
<b>Kiwano melon</b>		This oval-shaped fruit has horns on its bright orange and yellow peel. The Kiwano melon's pale yellow-green flesh is sweet, but a bit tart, with a flavor similar to a combination of bananas, lime, and cucumber. Like other melons, the skin is not edible. The fruit should be cut into wedges and then eaten, or the flesh should be scooped out of the shell.	Vitamin C, vitamin A, and fiber
<b>Guava</b>		The thin skin of this oval-shaped fruit may be yellow, purple, or nearly black, and its size varies from a small egg to a medium apple. The flesh is sweet with a slight aftertaste. The entire guava can be eaten, although it is often cut into slices with the seeds discarded.	Vitamin C, vitamin A, fiber, folate, potassium

Source: fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov



# CHILDREN

## Here Comes Baby

Becoming a big brother or big sister is a big step for a child. These suggestions can help you prepare your child for the pitter patter of another pair of little feet:



- » **Take time to talk.** You can increase your child's comfort level by explaining what's happening and how it will affect him or her. Point out that, although things will change around the house and the baby will need a lot of care, your feelings for him or her will not change.
- » **Register for a class.** A sibling class can provide a big-sibling-to-be with a better appreciation of what to expect when the baby arrives. Check with your hospital or doctor for information about a class near you.
- » **Read all about it.** Reading books together about becoming a big sibling can help ease your child into the idea. Looking at your child's baby book and pictures can also help him or her understand how fragile babies are and how much attention they need.
- » **Share the experience.** Include your child as you prepare for the baby. For example, go shopping together for baby clothes and supplies, and ask your child to help you get the baby's room ready.

## Vegetarians Need Variety

So, your teen just announced he or she is now a vegetarian. Is this a healthy choice? The American Dietetic Association says yes, as long as your child's new diet is "well-planned." That means eating a variety of foods that include essential nutrients and enough calories for energy and growth. Here's a chart that can help:

Nutrient	Common Vegetarian Sources
<b>Protein</b>	Dairy products; eggs; nuts; peanut butter; beans; peas; tofu; seeds; soy milk; veggie burgers.
<b>Calcium</b>	Dairy products; calcium-fortified soy milk, juice, and cereal; kale; broccoli; tofu made with calcium sulfate; tahini (sesame butter).
<b>Iron</b>	Beans; peas; lentils; spinach; iron-fortified bread and cereal; some dried fruit, including raisins; include foods with vitamin C to help the body absorb the iron, like oranges, citrus juices, tomatoes, and broccoli.
<b>Zinc</b>	Dairy products; nuts; beans; whole grains; zinc-fortified cereal; tofu; pumpkin seeds.
<b>Vitamin D</b>	Milk, vitamin D-fortified soy milk, cereal, and juice; sunlight; supplements*.
<b>Vitamin B12</b>	Dairy products; eggs; B12-fortified soy milk and cereal; nutritional yeast; supplements*.

\*Ask your doctor if supplements are appropriate.

## Prevent a TV Tip-over

Americans love their TVs. But, there is a potential hazard many of us don't consider when we put them in our homes: a TV tip-over. In fact, thousands of children are injured or killed each year because a television fell over. The Center for Injury Research and Policy offers these tips to prevent a TV from toppling:

- » Parents should not place items of interest (toys, remote control) high on shelves or on top of the TV. Children may try to climb up the furniture to reach these items.
- » Place the TV on a low, wide base. Push it as far back on its base as possible.
- » Do not use shelves or dressers as TV stands. These are not made to support the weight of a TV. When purchasing a TV stand, check the size and weight limits.
- » Strap all TVs to a stable stand and/or wall.
- » Keep cords from TVs and other appliances tucked away so a child does not pull these items down on himself.

For more on preventing TV tip-overs and other safety topics, please visit [injurycenter.org](http://injurycenter.org).



# OLDER ADULTS

## Turn Over a New Leaf

People have been enjoying tea since ancient times. Although the health benefits of tea are still being studied, this zero-calorie drink is a delicious alternative to sugary juices and has less caffeine than coffee.

Black, green, oolong, and white tea are all produced from the *Camellia sinensis* plant. Black tea is the type

most commonly consumed by Americans, while white, green, and oolong teas are more popular in Asian countries. Here is a look at the four types of tea.

**White tea.** Made from very young leaves, white tea is the least processed of all teas. It has a light, sweet taste and the least caffeine of all types of tea. *Examples: Darjeeling, blueberry*

**Green tea.** This type of tea is slightly more processed,

and has slightly more caffeine, than white tea. Its flavor is often described as light and grassy—some green teas are sweeter than others. *Examples: Jasmine, sencha*

**Oolong tea.** These teas often have a floral or even spicy taste. In both taste and caffeine level, they fall between green and black teas. *Examples: Honeydew, jade*

**Black tea.** Generally the highest in caffeine, black



tea goes through an oxidation process that gives it a dark color. While black teas can be made with boiling water, the three other types of tea should be made with water just below the boiling point. *Examples: English breakfast, earl grey*

## Home Tweet Home

If you think that social networking sites, such as Facebook®, MySpace™, and Twitter™, are just for younger generations, think again.

In fact, according to a Pew Internet survey, people between 70 and 75 years old represent the largest increase of Internet use since 2005, from 26 percent to 45 percent. Facebook reports that their fastest growing segment of users is women over the age of 55, a nearly 550 percent increase since late 2008. By comparison, users younger than age 25 grew less than 20 percent over the same time.

There are even new networking/community sites popping up that are designed just for this growing demographic: Eons.com, GrowingBolder.com, and ELDR.com among them. No matter which site you choose, social networking can help you:

- » Keep in touch with family members who live far away.
- » Communicate with grandchildren.
- » Connect with old friends.
- » Meet new people.
- » Get involved, by finding out about events and resources right in your community.



## David Dess, D.M.D.

Middletown, Rhode Island

By the time most people are just having their morning coffee, Dr. David Dess has already cycled from his home in Middletown all the way to Portsmouth and back again—a good 22 miles. As long as there's no ice or heavy rain, he rides year round just about every morning. Then with his workout behind him by 7:00 a.m., he gets ready to see patients at his busy dental practice. "I think the key is to find something that you're passionate about," he says. "Cycling helps me to stay focused for the day." David is also an avid cycle racer and his daughters, Meghan and Alexis, enjoy cheering him on.

**What is your favorite exercise?**  
"Cycling."

**What is your favorite place to exercise?**  
"Ocean Drive, Newport; White Mountains, New Hampshire."

**What are your favorite healthy foods?**  
"Fresh fruit and anything with oats in it."

**What are your words to live by?**  
"You need to put back into your body what you take out of it."

*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](mailto:choices@bcbsri.org) or mail it to:

"Picture of Health"  
Choices magazine  
Blue Cross & Blue Shield  
of Rhode Island  
500 Exchange Street  
Providence, RI 02903



Photo by Ronald Cowie



# CHOICE

## HAS ALWAYS BEEN IMPORTANT TO OUR MEMBERS.

As you may know, our pharmacy benefits manager is changing in 2010. However, we made sure you still have access to more than **60,000 pharmacies** nationwide. That includes most major chain stores and many local, independently owned pharmacies.

You can keep using the pharmacy you've always gone to. To confirm it's in our network or to find a different pharmacy near you, visit **BCBSRI.com**.

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island  
444 Westminster Street  
Providence, RI 02903

PRSRT STD  
AUTO  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
GLASGOW, KY  
PERMIT #990

# A click of prevention.



**Now on [BCBSRI.com](http://BCBSRI.com)**

It's that time of year again. Are you ready? Visit "Flu News" on **BCBSRI.com** throughout the season for up-to-date flu information as well as

- Everyday prevention tips
- Vaccine recommendations
- Resources to help you stay healthy



Your Plan for Life.™