

HEALTH CARE & PLANNING GUIDE



Allergy-Proof Your Home

- Keep humidity in the house below 50 percent to prevent mold growth.
- Clean dehumidifiers at least once a week.
- Don't use fans—they stir up dust; keep windows closed and use air conditioning.
- Keep pets out of bedrooms and preferably out of the house. Animal dander and saliva are common allergens.
- Wash shower curtains and bathroom tiles with mold-killing solutions.
- Have someone else clean basements, garages and crawl spaces where molds may collect.
- Keep indoor plants to a minimum; mold loves soil.
- Store firewood outside.
- Choose hardwood floors instead of carpeting. If you do have any carpeting, choose low-pile material.
- Replace dust-collecting drapes and Venetian blinds with window shades.
- Wash your bedding every week in hot water.
- Make sure any throw rugs are fully washable.

Super Foods

Antioxidants help prevent cellular damage. Eat plenty of:

- Almonds
- Carrots
- Tomatoes
- Citrus Fruits
- Spinach
- Bell Peppers

Calcium keeps teeth and bones strong.

- Best calcium source: any from a cow
- Helpful: calcium-fortified juices and cereals

Soy lowers cholesterol, thus helping prevent heart disease, and is high in iron, which many women need, especially during menopause.

- Great for snacking: adaname (green soybeans)
- Health in disguise: tofu, mixed with anything, takes on the taste of what it's cooked with

Fiber also lowers cholesterol and prevents certain cancers. You'll find the most fiber in:

- Whole fruits and vegetables, fresh or frozen
- Beans of any kind, but especially black beans
- Whole grain breads and cereals that have at least three grams of fiber per serving

Water is more important than most people realize. Don't wait until you're thirsty—thirst fades with age, even though your body still needs water.

Drink:

- 100 percent fruit and vegetable juices
- Skim or low-fat milk
- Sparkling water
- Broth
- Tea

Source: www.webMD.com



Who Knew?

- Exercise boosts profits: A study of entrepreneurs by Ball State University found that daily exercisers are 14 percent more likely to reach their income goals.
- Physical inactivity contributes to 300,000 preventable deaths a year in the United States.
- For women as well as men, cardiovascular disease—strokes and heart attacks—is the No. 1 killer.
- If you're heading to a developing or tropical area, get a consular information sheet.

The Sedentary Kid

- Only 17 percent of middle and junior high schools—and only two percent of senior high schools—require daily physical activity for all students.
- Only 20 percent of students in grades 9 through 12 engage in moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes five or more days a week.
- Children who are less active at ages three and four stay less active than their peers.
- Children not yet in grade school need 60 minutes of physical activity every day.
- One-quarter of all U.S. children spend four or more hours watching TV every day.

All Gummed Up

Gum disease is not only the No. 1 cause of tooth loss in the United States, it has been implicated in cases of heart disease, stroke, cancer and even premature birth. It's a chronic infection, and chronic infection can trigger cancer, among other diseases, in half a dozen ways.

Americans spend \$600 million a year on procedures to bleach their teeth, but won't put in 5 minutes a day to lengthen their lives by flossing.

Don't know how to floss: Check out the instructions from the American Dental Association at www.ada.org.

Are You Storing Stress?

Your body will tell you when you're under too much stress. Watch for:

- Rapid Heartbeat
- Stiff Neck
- Backache
- Sweating
- Diarrhea
- Headaches
- Tight Shoulders
- Rapid Breathing
- Upset Stomach

Your mood will also tell you. Are you:

- More irritable than usual?
- More short-tempered?
- Jumpy?
- Having trouble concentrating?
- Obsessing about little things?
- Exhausted all the time?
- Less decisive than usual?

Take a few hours to step back from your life and ask yourself questions like:

- What's new in my life? Change is stressful, even change you wanted.
- What is satisfying me in my life? What isn't?
- How do I feel about my job? What could I do about it?
- Am I doing anything that I want to do? Make time for yourself.
- Is my lifestyle making me happy? Or making things worse?

FYI:

Pollen counts tend to be highest between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m., so try to stay indoors during these times.



Quick Exercises to Boost Energy

Boosting your heart rate will also boost your energy and clear your head.

- Run up stairs quickly for a minute or so. Take the next flight two at a time. Walk down at a normal pace.
- Pretend you're jumping rope: For 15 seconds each, do:
 - Standard jumps, rotating your arms
 - Quick skips, like boxers
 - The twist
 - Side-to-side jumps
 - Jumps around the four corners of an imaginary box
- Do chair aerobics:
 - Pump your arms overhead
 - Punch out across your body as you twist at the waist
 - Do some toe taps and heel lifts
 - Jog sitting down, lifting your knees as high as you can

Source: Kelli Calbrese, American Council on Exercise, www.prevention.com.

Are You Overweight?

The best way to know whether you're really overweight is to determine your body mass index (BMI), a measure of body fat in adult men and women based on height and weight.

- Divide your weight in pounds by your height in inches squared.
- Multiply the result by 703.

Example: You're 5'9" (69") and weigh 200 pounds. You can already guess you're in trouble, but to make sure:

$$\mathbf{200 \text{ divided by } 4761 [69 \times 69] = .042}$$
$$\mathbf{.042 \text{ times } 703 = 29.5}$$

Healthy weight people have a BMI between 18.5 and 24.9. Overweight people have a BMI of 25.0 to 29.9. Another .4 in BMI and you'd register as obese.

For more information, including "Limitations of the BMI" and "Assessing Your Risk" of problems associated with being overweight, visit www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/bmicalc.htm.

What's Cooking?

You can turn your kitchen into a health promotion center without losing out on flavor and fun. Get great recipes at:

www.deliciousdecisions.org (American Heart Association)

www.mayoclinic.com (search topic: Recipes)

www.diabetes.org (search topic: Recipes)

Are Cell Phones a Health Risk?

In a word: **No.**

It's true that because cell phones are powered by electricity, they give off electromagnetic radiation (also known as electric and magnetic fields: EMF). So do microwaves, computers and electric clocks. The amount of exposure depends on how long you use these devices. But after thorough scientific study, it has been found that cell phone users do not have a higher risk of brain cancer than noncell users.

More information: www.fda.gov, "Consumer Update on Wireless Phones."



Understanding Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a soft, waxy substance that's used to build the walls of all your cells. It's also used in hormone production and to make the bile acids that help you digest food.

Despite scary warnings to the contrary, you do need cholesterol. The trick is to keep the right balance, because cholesterol, like people (and almost everything else in life), can be good or bad:

Your total cholesterol level is the sum of good HDL, bad LDL, and one-fifth of the amount you have of another blood fat, triglycerides:

High-density lipoprotein (HDL) seems to protect against heart attack by carrying cholesterol away from the arteries to the liver to be eliminated.

Good numbers:

- For women: 50 mg/dL or higher
- For men: 40 mg/dL or higher

Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is the major cholesterol carrier in the blood but it can build up in the walls of your arteries, forming hard, thick plaque deposits. Plaque may not cause any problems for years, but if it ruptures suddenly, it can release chemicals that cause blood clots, which in turn can block blood flow and cause a heart attack or stroke. There's no gender distinction here:

- Optimal: less than 100 mg/dL
- Near optimal: 100-129 mg/dL
- Borderline: 130-159 mg/dL

Triglycerides at elevated levels put you at risk for heart attack and stroke:

- Goal: 150 mg/dL or under, or
- If you've already had a heart attack: 100 mg/dL

You may not be able to control how your age, gender and genes affect your cholesterol levels, but you can control your diet, physical activity and body weight.

Hangover Helper

Prevention is the best thing to do for a hangover, so when you know you may be at risk:

- Eat first, especially bread and protein products.
- Nibble your way through the evening as well.
- Set a drink max before you go out—you know your limits.
- Gin and vodka have the fewest congeners (natural byproducts of alcohol fermentation that can make a hangover worse); bourbon and red wine have the most.
- Slow down to one drink an hour to give your body a chance to process the alcohol; if you're a faster drinker, alternate an alcoholic drink with water or juice—not carbonated drinks, because they can heighten hangovers.
- Drink plenty of water while you're out and especially when you're home. Alcohol is a diuretic.

Source: www.goaskalice.columbia.edu; more information: the goaskalice archive on alcohol, nicotine & other drugs.

Your Tax Dollars at Work

The federal government is a fount of useful health information. Try:

www.healthfinder.gov

www.nih.gov

www.osha.gov

www.cdc.gov

www.fda.gov



Taste the Trend

The Atkins® Diet is all the rage, and you can learn more about carbohydrate control at www.atkins.com. But first you'll want to learn more about carbohydrates from the Harvard School of Public Health at www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/carbohydrates.html.

In response to the popularity of Atkins and other low-carbohydrate diets (even fast-food chains like Burger King are hopping on the low-carb bandwagon), the FDA released a carbohydrate fact sheet (www.fda.gov/oc/initiatives/obesity/factsheet.html) about its intent to "initiate rulemaking proceedings for nutrient content claims for carbohydrate[s]." Stay tuned.

Tip: Dietary intake of complex carbohydrates, such as those derived from plants, can lower blood cholesterol when they are substituted for saturated fat.

To Sleep . . . Finally

If insomnia's getting you down, try this:

- Ask your doctor whether any of your medications might be affecting your sleep.
- Limit or eliminate caffeine, nicotine and alcohol—and certainly don't use any late in the day or in the evening.
- Get as much sunlight as you can during the day.
- Read or watch TV somewhere other than the bedroom.
- Go to bed and get up at the same times every day.
- Don't nap late in the afternoon (an earlier half-hour nap is actually a good idea).
- Keep your bedroom quiet, dark and cool.
- Don't eat or drink anything after 9:00 p.m.
- Take care of challenging things early in the day.
- When you first get in bed, do progressive relaxation: that's tightening up and then releasing one set of muscles at a time, starting from your toes and working up through your neck.

Useful Web Sites

www.webMD.com

www.familydoctor.org

www.healthanswers.com

www.clevelandclinic.com

www.mayoclinic.com
(handy target heart rate calculator)

www.health.harvard.edu
(get HEALTHBEAT, a free monthly newsletter)

www.prevention.com

www.intelihealth.com
(Aetna and Johns Hopkins: get free health e-mails)

www.hopkins-arthritis.org

www.diabetes.org

www.healthy.net

www.healthcentral.com

www.goaskalice.columbia.edu

www.quackwatch.com
(check out health rumors and hoaxes here)