

TAKE CHARGE!



for health and living

August 2013



Coffee Confusion



Is coffee healthful or not?

Ongoing research suggests coffee, regular and decaffeinated, may have positive health effects and few negative ones.

For example, major studies have found those who drank 3 to 4 cups of coffee daily were 20% to 25% less likely to develop diabetes; protection appeared greater for decaf drinkers.

And the latest Harvard study of 130,000 people found no increased risk of death from cancer, heart disease or any cause among those who drank up to 6 cups a day.

How much is OK? The American Medical Association says that moderate coffee drinking (2 to 5 cups – 250 to 500 mg of caffeine) is likely harmless for healthy folks. **Note:** Research is typically based on black coffee drinks – not beverages with multiple jolts of caffeine and 200 to 500 extra calories per drink from sweeteners and whipped cream.



Watch for side effects. If you have regular insomnia, avoid caffeine – especially close to bedtime. If you're pregnant, have acid reflux or develop side effects such as nervousness and digestive problems, follow your provider's recommendations for caffeine from all sources.

health care

Medications: Take as Directed

Many people begin using multiple medications by middle age as they develop common, long-term conditions such as arthritis, high blood pressure or diabetes.

That's the time to be cautious: The effectiveness and safety of your prescription drugs can be affected when taken with other prescribed drugs, as well as food, alcohol, supplements and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs. Post these reminders:

➔ Continued on page 4.



city events

Food Intolerances and Sensitivities – Part II

Thursday, August 1
12 noon – 1:00 pm
SMT 4050

Time Management Webinar

Thursday, August 8
12 noon – 1:00 pm
Registration: See email flyer*

Taking Sleep Seriously

Tuesday, August 13
12 noon – 1:00 pm
SMT 4050

Women and Investing – Deferred Compensation

Thursday, August 15
12 noon – 12:45 pm
SMT 4080

Money Basics

Thursday, August 22
12 noon – 1:00 pm
SMT 4050

Big Day of Play

Saturday, August 24
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Magnuson Park
7400 Sand Point Way NE

Generational Investing – Deferred Compensation

Wednesday, August 28
12 noon – 12:45 pm
SMT 4020
Register at 206-447-1924

Free Blood Pressure Screening

Wednesday, August 28
Stop by between 10:30 & 1:30
SMT 4096

*Or, call Central Benefits at (206) 615-1340.

“ Nothing is a waste of time if you use the experience wisely. ”
– Rodin

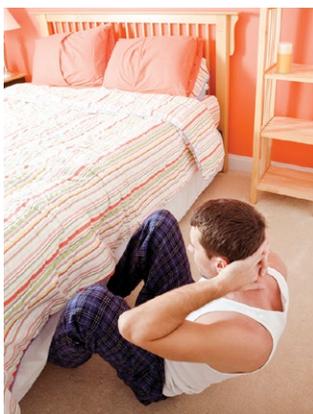


Exercise: Even a Few Minutes Matter

By Charles Platkin, PhD, MPH

Yes, it really can help to exercise for even a few minutes at a time, as long as they add up to at least 30 minutes per day, say researchers at Oregon State University. In fact, the researchers concluded that these short bouts can be just as beneficial as longer bouts of physical exercise achieved by a trip to the gym. This is important because most people report lack of time as the single most important reason they don't exercise. The study also looked at everyday activities such as raking leaves, and found they also contribute to overall health. So don't think if you miss your gym workout today you might as well not exercise at all – every little bit counts.

Charles Platkin, the Diet Detective, is the founder of DietDetective.com and host of the TV series *I Want To Save Your Life*. He is a syndicated columnist for more than 100 daily newspapers, author of numerous books, and a leading U.S. public health advocate.



Primary Care Providers 101

Your primary care provider (PCP) is like a band leader arranging the various musicians and their music in concert together. Primary providers work closely with their patients to identify and treat common medical conditions, monitor their ongoing health needs and help ensure those needs are met.

Your PCP will coordinate the care you may need from other providers, including specialists, labs, pharmacies and mental health facilities, to help you receive the most appropriate and affordable care.

By getting to know you and your medical history, your PCP can also more easily provide disease preventive care and encourage positive healthful behaviors.

Most PCPs are physicians, including family medicine practitioners, pediatricians and internists. Nurse practitioners and physician assistants also can be PCPs.

When choosing your PCP:

1. Understand your insurance coverage.
2. Check your state physicians and nurses associations; previous provider or other health professional; and your health plan's practitioners directory.
3. Seek a new provider if your relationship has become less effective due to, for example, poor communication.

This person may be involved in your health and health care for a long time, so it's important to select someone with whom you can work well.



QuikQuiz: What's On Your Plate?

The message of the MyPlate nutrition campaign is simple. Fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables. Split the other half between grains and high-protein foods (choosemyplate.gov).

Why does this matter? In 2010, the National Cancer Institute found that most Americans don't eat enough fruits, vegetables and whole grains – foods shown to significantly lower the risk of several diseases.

Test your MyPlate knowledge:

1. Which of these represents 1 serving from the vegetable group?
 - a) 1 cup of cooked vegetables
 - b) 1 cup of raw vegetables
 - c) 2 cups of leafy greens
 - d) all of the above
2. **True or false:** One-third of the grains you eat daily should be whole grains.
3. Which of these foods is not a whole grain?
 - a) whole-wheat pasta
 - b) brown rice
 - c) couscous
 - d) oats



ANSWERS:

1. *d* – Most adults need at least 2 to 3 cups each of vegetables and fruits daily.
2. *False* – At least half of your grains should be whole, such as whole-wheat bread, brown rice, whole oats and whole-grain pasta. Aim for 6 to 9 ounces daily.
3. *c* – Couscous is a dish made from tiny refined granules of durum wheat.



How much you need to eat depends on your age, gender and activity level. **Tip:** Try moving from a 12-inch to a 10-inch dinner plate – this has helped people to serve and eat 20% to 25% less.



Back(pack) to School Tips

If you have children heading back to school, keep these tips in mind for backpacks:

Choose a backpack that's lightweight, has wide, padded shoulder straps, a padded back, a waist belt and multiple compartments to help distribute weight more evenly.

Don't allow children to carry a pack more than 10% to 20% of their body weight. For example, a child who weighs 80 pounds shouldn't carry a backpack that weighs more than 8 to 16 pounds.

Tip: Encourage kids to use their lockers or desks frequently throughout the day instead of carrying the entire day's worth of books in their backpacks.

Make sure children use both shoulder straps to reduce risk of straining shoulder and back muscles. Tighten the straps until the pack rests evenly in the middle of the back.

Show kids how to bend at the knees and grab the backpack with both hands when lifting it.

Use all of the backpack's compartments. Put heavier items, such as books, closest to the center of the back.

best bites

Produce Pick: Fresh Mint

Fresh mint leaves add pizzazz to fruit salads, fruit drinks and sweet dishes. Try it with cooked carrots, fresh pea soup, chilled yogurt soup, lamb, and in cold grain salads, such as tabbouli or quinoa. Summer mint cooler: In a tall glass, combine several crushed mint leaves and a bit of honey; add a few skinny cucumber slices and pour in seltzer water.



Choosing the Right Cookbook

From step-by-step beginner's recipes to high-level French cuisine, there is a cookbook for every skill level and taste.

Begin your search by reading online cookbook reviews. Most booksellers group cookbooks according to the contents. Look in the "health" or "well-being" section.

Look for recipes that:

- ✓ Include lots of fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ Use whole grains such as brown rice and quinoa, instead of refined grains.
- ✓ Call for healthful protein options, such as fish, skinless poultry, legumes or lean meat.
- ✓ Require low-fat milk products, such as skim milk and 0% to 2% yogurt.

Next, choose recipes that include the:

1. Cooking time: It's handy to know how long each recipe will take.

Tip: Beginners may need to double the cooking time until they become more adept at chopping and dicing.



nutrition watch
By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

2. Number of servings: Have you ever made a soup that serves 16 portions, but only 2 of you are eating? Choose recipes that provide the number of servings, so you can halve or double (or leave as is) the recipe to accommodate the number of diners.

3. Nutrition information: Some recipes seem healthful, but the numbers may tell a different story. Choose a cookbook that lists amounts of calories, fat, protein, carbohydrates, fiber and sodium.

Finally, get a book that has measures you use. Most cookbooks use metric and imperial units, which are practical if you have measuring cups. Some cookbooks use weight (ounces and grams), which only works if you have a kitchen scale.

Watermelon Salsa

- 1-2 tbsp fresh **lime juice**
- 1-2 tbsp fresh **cilantro**, chopped
- ¼ tsp **garlic powder**
- ½ tsp **hot chili sauce**, to taste
- 1½ cups seedless firm **watermelon**, diced
- ½ cup firm **avocado**, diced
- ½ **mango**, chopped



Combine first 4 ingredients and gently combine with fruit. Serve with salad greens or alongside grilled shrimp, fish, beef or poultry.

Tip: Salsa means "sauce" in Spanish. It's a versatile, colorful complement to many foods. To create your own, simply combine fresh, ripe fruits and vegetables cut into similar small pieces; pick a variety of colors and textures. Add your favorite seasonings and a squeeze of citrus juice.

MAKES 2 CUPS TOTAL (4, 1/2-cup servings).

59 calories | .9g protein | 2.8g total fat | .4g sat fat | 1.8g mono fat | .3g poly fat
| 0.0mg cholesterol | 9g carbs | 6.5g sugar | 1.8g fiber | 20mg sodium

From Personal Best®

Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

Phone: 800-871-9525

Fax: 205-437-3084

E-mail: editor@personalbest.com

Website: www.personalbest.com

Executive Editor: Susan Cottman • Advisors: Eric Endlich, PhD; Cynthia Gale, MS, RD; Mary P. Hollins, MS, JD; Alice Lockridge, MS; Diane McReynolds, past Executive Editor; Zorba Paster, MD; Charles Stuart Platkin, PhD, MPH; Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP; Designer: Heather Preston Burke

The content herein is in no way intended to serve as a substitute for professional advice. Sources available on request. © 2013 Oakstone Publishing, LLC. All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction in any form of any part of this publication is a violation of federal copyright law and is strictly prohibited.

Personal Best® ... A Learning Solution powered by Oakstone®.
2700 Corporate Drive, Suite 100 Birmingham, AL 35242
800-871-9525 • fax 205-437-3084. ♻️ Printed on recycled paper.

news & notes

- **Mobile Health:** Check out Aetna and Group Health's free smart phone apps. Search your app store for Aetna Mobile or Group Health Mobile.
- **Aetna CarePass:** Discover CarePass – and meet personal health goals with free apps. Enroll through your account on AetnaNavigator.com.
- **Change in Family Status?** Tell your department's benefits representative if you: get married, have a new domestic partner, legally separate, divorce, end a domestic partnership, or add a child through birth, adoption or guardianship. There may be benefits implications.
- **Find an Eye Doctor:** Need a vision exam? Find a doctor in the Vision Service Plan network at www.vspenvisionnewsletter.com; select "Find a Doctor" tab.
- **Open Enrollment for 2014:** Make benefit choices Monday, October 7 through Thursday, October 31. Look for a mailing to your home in September.



top safety

Carpal Tunnel Cautions

Despite media attention and training to prevent it, carpal tunnel syndrome continues to be a problem for some people. Carpal tunnel syndrome affects the median nerve in the wrist and can lead to numbness, tingling, pain and weakness in the hand and arm.

Reduce your risk of carpal tunnel syndrome with these tips:

- **Keep** work centered in front of you. If you stand while working, keep your work surface at waist level.
- **Hold** your hands and wrists at a 90° angle with your forearm. If you work at a keyboard, you may have to tilt it to help keep this alignment.
- **Keep** your elbows close to your side.
- **Don't** let your hands, wrists or elbows rest on any surface while working.
- **Avoid** gripping things (such as a tool or mouse) too tightly.
- **Take** breaks every 10 to 15 minutes to stretch and rotate your wrists.



expert advice

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

Q: What is biofeedback?

A: Harnessing your body's signals to improve your health is called biofeedback. This technique allows you to change your skin temperature or muscle tension, for example. You can also learn to influence your brain activity, blood pressure, heart rate and other bodily functions that normally are not controlled voluntarily.

The setup usually involves a computer and a way to connect your body to the computer, such as a transducer or a set of electrodes. The computer translates the electrical signals from the electrodes into an image on your computer screen. During biofeedback you learn to change a particular body process in such a way that it brings the pictured image on your computer screen into the desired target range.

Anxiety, high blood pressure, heart disease, asthma and chronic pain may improve with biofeedback.

Medications: Take as Directed

Continued from page 1.

- **List all medicines and supplements** you are taking; include prescribed dosage, when you take them, and potential side effects. Share this list with your provider at every visit.
- **Learn about any potential for drug interactions**, such as taking your blood pressure prescription with a decongestant. **Tip:** Get your provider's OK before taking a new OTC medicine.
- **Use one pharmacy.** Ask your pharmacist to track all of your prescriptions and alert you to possible drug interactions.
- **Maintain a medication file** listing all the medicines and supplements you take. Include any related written material that accompanies your medicines.
- **Take your meds routinely**, at the same time every day.

