

TAKE CHARGE!



for health and living

December 2012

top health

Better Health in Minutes



This year, why not put you at the top of your holiday gift list? Start now

with simple health challenges that fit easily into your routine. For example:

- **Practice deep breathing** several times a day to release tension. Just sit, breathe and slow down for 2 minutes. That's all.
- **Brush your teeth** for 2 minutes twice a day; floss each night for healthy gums.
- **Whip up a morning fruit smoothie** with nonfat milk or yogurt and protein powder.
- **Avoid rushing.** Leave 10 minutes earlier.



- **Track your calories** in a journal if you're watching your weight.

- **Open doors and windows** for 10 minutes to create cross-ventilation and freshen indoor air.
- **Spend 10 minutes a day** doing core exercises or stretching out your muscles.
- **Take a few minutes each week to plan balanced meals** and healthy snacks. Shop in advance.



To change habits, start small and make steady progress. Success will come and encourage you in other areas.

city events

Goal Setting for Work and Life

Thursday, December 6
12 noon - 1:00 pm
SMT Room 4050

VEBA Information Session

Tuesday, December 11
12 noon - 1:00 pm
SMT Room 1600

Retirement Readiness – Deferred Compensation

Thursday, December 13
12 noon - 12:45 pm
SMT Room 4090

Blood Pressure Screening

Wednesday, December 19
Stop by between 11:30 & 1:30
SMT Room 4096

Account Consolidation – Deferred Compensation

Thursday, December 27
12 noon - 12:45 pm
SMT Room 4020
Register at 206-447-1924

■ **Find a great way to donate your time and talent at VolunteerMatch.org.** It's the Web's largest volunteer recruiting tool, and connects good folks to good causes. You can help teach, build, rebuild, clean up, or support children, seniors or animals in need. Encourage your kids to get involved, and you'll all benefit from the spirit of giving.

“Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live.”
~ Jim Rohn

Latest Cold Care Advice

Colds are minor viral infections of the nose and throat that last about a week. As soon as you feel symptoms coming on, take steps to relieve them.

Over-the-counter medications: These include an oral or a nasal spray decongestant for a stuffy nose; or an analgesic pain reliever for a headache or an earache; and dextromethorphan for a cough.

Note: Always read drug labels for proper use, or to determine if the product is safe for children.

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This Edition ➔ Places Germs Love
Personal Best ➔ Holiday Appetizers
➔ Safe Gift Guide

Need Headache Help? Turn to page 2. ➔



Avoid Post-Exercise Ache

The American College of Sports Medicine defines 2 basic kinds of exercise-related muscle soreness. Pain that occurs during exercise is called **acute**. It signals a problem with your exercise form or intensity. If you feel pain during exercise, stop the activity before you damage a muscle or joint. Acute soreness usually subsides after resting for several minutes.

Any type of activity that places unusual loads on a muscle may lead to **delayed onset muscle soreness**. It typically starts in 12 to 24 hours and produces the most pain 24 to 72 hours after your activity.

Activities that often cause delayed soreness include descending stairs or hills, jogging and weight lifting. For example, doing more muscle repetitions than you're ready for can cause soreness – which is why we are taught to add reps gradually. **Tip:** Progress slowly with a new activity. Gradually increase how long, how frequently and how intensively you exercise.

Delayed muscle soreness may last 3 to 5 days, but it actually builds a partial protective effect that reduces soreness in the involved muscle for weeks to come.

6 Places Germs Love

At home or work, in cars, coffee shops, airplanes, gyms and other public places, we pick up most germs from the objects we touch and share.

While no surface is ever germ-free, here are some common places that need frequent disinfecting.

- 1 Kitchen sinks and drain plugs – they're major breeding grounds for bacteria from leftover food.
- 2 Toilet – close the lid before flushing (especially airplane toilets).
- 3 Office desks may harbor 400 times more germs than the average toilet seat – clean with disinfecting wipes weekly.
- 4 Remote control – wipe it down daily.
- 5 Computer keyboard, mouse and phones – clean keyboards and surfaces with wipes weekly.
- 6 Bath tubs, showers and drains – they're ideal for breeding bacteria. Clean and disinfect often.

To help guard against infection, always wash your hands before preparing or eating food, and after using the bathroom, handling garbage, blowing your nose, or changing a diaper.

Wash your hands and fingernails for 20 seconds with warm water and lots of soapy lather. Thoroughly rinse and dry. And keep your hands away from your mouth, nose and eyes.



When You Need Help for Your Headaches



Most head pain can be self-treated with pain medicine or a little relaxation. But what if your headache symptoms just aren't typical for you? Don't be reluctant to have your head pain checked out, as it can signal a serious condition.

See your provider without delay if:

- You've had your first severe or worst ever headache.
- You've had a headache with neurological symptoms – blurred vision, numbness, poor balance or trouble speaking (signs of a stroke, a tumor, a migraine or encephalitis or other neurological problems).
- Your headache occurs with a fever, a stiff neck, persistent vomiting or confusion.
- Your headache follows a head injury or serious illness.

Make an appointment with your provider if:

- Your headaches occur several times a month and last for hours or days.
- Your headaches have become more frequent or severe.
- Your headaches interfere with your normal work and activities.
- Your pattern of headaches started after the age of 50.

Give your provider a summary of your headache pattern, symptoms, self-care steps and known triggers. Ask questions, and follow your provider's advice for improvement.

Treatment works best when you're involved as a member of your health care team.



✓ Checklist:

How's Your Posture?

A major cause of back and neck pain is slouchy posture, especially while sitting. In our sedentary lifestyle, sitting has become the “activity” of choice, whether we’re working or relaxing.

Long periods of sitting add pressure to the spine, wearing down the vertebral discs and joints from your neck to your lower back. Proper posture while sitting helps support the spine – if only we’d remember to sit up right.

Stay posture-aware: Post this checklist near your work station.



GOOD SITTING POSTURE AT WORK

- Keep your chair backrest comfortably aligned with the inward curve of your spine.
- Keep shoulders straight, touching the chair backrest.
- Keep knees level with your hips or slightly higher.
- Keep feet flat on the floor (adjust chair height or use a footrest if necessary).
- Avoid slouching or leaning forward while working.
- Practice “dynamic sitting” – shift your hips back and forth, wiggle, stretch your arms, neck, shoulders and feet – anything to reduce a static posture.

Remember, the spine is a long collection of joints made for motion, so give it a chance to move. Get up, stretch, bend your spine to the right and left and forward and backward and move around regularly throughout the day to recharge your stiff muscles.



Best advice: Keep your back muscles in shape. Keep them strong with resistance exercises and stretch them every day. Ask your health care provider for guidelines.

nutrition watch

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Healthful Holiday Appetizers



From sit-down holiday dinners to impromptu parties, food is everywhere this month. Here are some tips for enjoying the festivities and food – on the light side.

Appetizers are easy to over-eat. But keep in mind: Small bites of baked brie, pigs-in-a-blanket or bacon-wrapped scallops have 50 to 100 calories per piece. Six little bites can add up to 300 to 600 calories. Instead, just eat 2 of the higher-calorie options.

Opt for appetizers with vegetables or fruit as the main ingredients. Choose raw vegetable sticks or slices of fruit. Skip deep-fried or cheese-covered bites. Craving protein? Try a few shrimp in cocktail sauce (15 calories per shrimp).

From traditional spinach dip to hummus, dips add calories, fat and sodium to your evening’s meal.

Enjoy your appetizers, but dip sparingly. A few teaspoons of dip and a few drops of a salty condiment are all you need.

Beverage calories count, too. Try alternating calorie-filled beverages with sparkling water (0 calories). Several glasses of regular soft drinks and punch can add up to hundreds of extra calories.



Produce Pick of the Month

Mandarin Oranges

A bright sweet treat in the winter, mandarins reach peak season November through February. Popular varieties are tangerine, satsuma and Clementine (sometimes called Cuties or Sweeties). Thin-skinned, firm mandarins are juiciest. They keep refrigerated up to a week, and are sweeter if you bring them up to room temp before eating.

Creamy White Bean Dip

EASY | RECIPE

From Personal Best®

1 15-oz can cannellini beans, drained
1 tsp minced garlic
2 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp fresh lemon juice

½ tsp Tabasco sauce
2 tbsp pine nuts
2 tbsp minced red bell pepper
(for garnish)



- In a food processor or blender, add first 5 ingredients; blend until smooth.
- Place mixture in a serving bowl and fold in pine nuts. Top with bell pepper.
- Serve with baked pita chips or cucumber slices, or spread on endive spears.

MAKES 1½ cups (24 tsp), about 12 servings.

60 calories | 2g protein | 3g total fat | .3g sat fat | 2g mono fat | 1g poly fat
| 0mg cholesterol | 6g carbs | 1g sugar | 2g fiber | 63mg sodium

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

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100 Corporate Parkway, Suite 600, Birmingham, AL 35242
800-871-9525 • fax 205-437-3084

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News and Notes

Confirmation Statements: Watch your home mail for a letter confirming your 2013 benefits elections. If your statement doesn't match your records, contact your department's benefits representative.

2013 Flexible Spending Account: Enrolled in a 2013 health care or dependent care FSA? You'll receive a packet in the mail from the new administrator, Flex-Plan Services, by December 1. If you want a Benny Card for health care expenses, you must request a new one. (Your card with BAC will expire after December 31, 2012). Look for a Benny Card and Direct Deposit request form in the packet.



24-Hour Nurse Consultation: Have a condition or illness question? Call a nurse any time. Employees with City medical coverage & covered family members age 18 and over have access to nurse consultation by phone.

Aetna's Informed Health Line: 1-800-556-1555

Group Health's Consulting Nurse Services:

- Seattle 206-901-2244 • Tacoma 253-596-3400
- All other areas 1-800-297-6877

expert advice

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

Q: What is whooping cough?



A: Pertussis is the other name for this highly contagious respiratory infection. It usually starts like a cold with a runny nose, congestion, a fever and a cough. In some patients the illness may progress to severe coughing spells. Children often develop a high-pitched whooping sound with the intake of air. Adults and teens are less likely to get the whoop but may have a persistent hacking cough instead.

The US has a growing pertussis epidemic with more than 27,000 cases reported in 2010. The disease is most dangerous in infants and toddlers and leads to hospitalizations and deaths every year.

People of all ages should see their health care provider if they develop a prolonged or severe cough, whooping sound with inhalation, vomiting or difficulty breathing. Antibiotics are used to treat whooping cough. The best way to prevent pertussis among infants, children, teens and adults is to get vaccinated.

Latest Gold Care Advice

➔ Continued from page 1.

Non-drug remedies: To moisten and relieve airways, try a salt-water gargle for a sore throat or a cough; a saline nasal spray for a stuffy nose; a clean humidifier or a cool mist vaporizer; or breathe in steam from a bowl of hot water or during a shower. Drink plenty of water.

Note: Antibiotics don't treat colds, unless bacterial infections develop as a complication.

A better way to shorten your cold symptoms – go to bed. It may feel contrary to your busy lifestyle, but devoting even 1 day of quiet bed rest lets your body direct more energy to fighting off germs. The only side effects are positive.



Looking for a gift with safety in mind?

We've got you covered. Here are just a few of the remarkable and innovative safety-minded items available.

- **Personal GPS:** A perfect gift recipients can use for taking a walk, finding their car in a parking lot or keeping track of their kids.
- **Bike safety turn signals:** This is a safety-must for the cyclists on your list.
- **Waterproof walkie-talkies:** Know someone who loves the water? These walkie-talkies are perfect for the beach-bound or sailing crew.
- **Mobile-eye driving products:** These products offer drivers a "third eye" to detect and alert them if they unintentionally cross a lane or are about to collide with another object in the front or with an undetected bicyclist or pedestrian.
- **Personal door alarms:** These are perfect for travelers or people who live alone.