

EXTRA HEALTH TIP:

Managing Springtime Allergies

Limit early morning outdoor activities, when pollen is usually emitted. Stay indoors as much as possible when the humidity and pollen counts are high. Enlist someone else to mow the lawn since that stirs up pollen and mold. Close windows at night to help keep pollen out. Take medications as prescribed by your doctor or discuss over-the-counter alternatives with your pharmacist. Some folks plan vacations to pollen-free places during spring. To check daily pollen and mold counts go to the National Allergy Bureau at www.aaaai.org.

817 Getting Enough Vitamin D

Research is promising for vitamin D's potential to lower the risk of some common cancers, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, hypertension, muscle weakness and even aging. At this time, the recommended daily intake is 200 IU for those under 50, 400 IU for those 51 - 70 and 600 IU for those 71 and older. Many experts believe those guidelines are too low and that 800 - 1000 IU is better, especially for people over 60. Since it's difficult for most people to get enough D from food, supplements are helpful. Look for vitamin D3. Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting supplementation.

EXTRA HEALTH TIP:

Chicken Pox Vaccine

Vaccination is the best way to fight the virus that causes chicken pox. It is recommended for children age 12 months to 12 years to have two doses, three months apart. While no vaccine is 100% effective, about 9 out of 10 people vaccinated don't get chicken pox. If an immunized person does contract chicken pox, it is usually a very mild case that only lasts a few days. If you are not sure if you have had chicken pox and are wondering if you should be vaccinated, a blood test is available to check immunity.

818 Nuts, Popcorn & Diverticulitis

Patients with diverticulosis (small, bulging pouches in the wall of the large intestine) were often told not to eat nuts, seeds, popcorn and foods with seeds like raspberries. It was believed these foods could get trapped in the pouches and cause inflammation (diverticulitis). A recent study of 47,000 men found no link between eating these foods and increased risk of diverticulitis. In fact, eating a diet high in fiber (which may include some of these foods) reduces the risk of diverticulitis. However, if you have problems with them, talk with your doctor or pharmacist about how to get enough fiber from other dietary sources.

819 Heel Pain - Plantar Fasciitis

Heel pain may be due to an inflammation of the thick band of tissue on the bottom of the foot. This can be the result of wearing high heels or thin-soled flats, strenuous exercise, excess weight, flat feet or high arches. It usually heals in about nine months. Treat it by keeping weight off the foot, limiting activities, icing and taking pain relievers. Stretching exercises can help. Sit with your legs crossed with the sore foot on the opposite knee. Grab the base of the toes and pull them toward the shin feeling the stretch across the sole. Hold for 10 seconds and release. Repeat 10 times, three times a day.

820 Use A Pedometer & Walk More

Walking is a convenient, inexpensive and effective form of exercise. A recent study in *JAMA* found that people who wore a pedometer (a small device that counts steps) increased their physical activity by 25% and walked an extra mile a day. Over a period of 18 weeks, they also lowered their blood pressure and lost more weight than those who didn't. A good goal is 10,000 steps a day. If you are a beginner, it's best to start by just adding 1,000 to 2,000 extra steps to your regular daily activity and then gradually build up to your goal.

821 Lower Blood Pressure Naturally

If you have borderline or moderate hypertension, dietary and lifestyle changes can help reduce your blood pressure. Limit intake of red meat and processed food. Eat more fruit, vegetables and whole grains. If you smoke, quit. Exercise 30 minutes most days. Drink adequate water and reduce sodium intake. Consume more foods that are high in potassium (bananas, dried fruit, squash, nuts, seeds and lentils) and magnesium (legumes, dark green vegetables and whole grains). Eat more omega-3 fatty acids from fish, flaxseed, walnuts and canola oil.

822 Benefits of Napping

Napping during the day can sharpen the mind, increase physical stamina, reduce stress, enhance creativity and raise levels of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that improves mood. Naps not only revitalize you, but a recent study of 23,000 people suggests that napping may also reduce the risk of heart disease. Those who napped for 30 minutes, three times a week had a 37% lower risk of dying from heart disease than those who didn't nap. Another study found that even a six minute "power nap" had an effect on memory and learning.