

MANAGED CARE EMPLOYEE WELLNESS NEWSLETTER



Erin Ortiz Blanco: ortize@ccf.org
Maria Rey: reym1@ccf.org

May is Stroke Awareness Month



A stroke happens when a part of the brain dies from lack of blood, usually because one of the arteries that supply oxygen-carrying blood to the brain has been damaged.

Stroke is a common and often misunderstood condition and its early symptoms are often ignored. Some brain cells deprived of oxygen die within minutes. Others may take a few hours to die depending on the nature of the blockage or hemorrhage. The loss of physical and mental functions is often permanent and can include motor-function disability. The most effective treatment for stroke can be administered if it is within three hours of the onset of stroke. Although strokes can occur at any age, most stroke patients (two-thirds) are over the age of 65.

Warning Signs:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

FAST:

FAST is an acronym for recognizing and responding to the symptoms of stroke. It stands for face, arms, speech and time, and it is being used as part of a campaign by the National Stroke Association to raise awareness about the impact of stroke on women.

If you think a person is having a stroke, call 911, especially if the person has trouble with these basic commands:

Face: Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?

Arms: Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

Speech: Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Are the words slurred? Can the patient repeat the sentence correctly?

Time: Get the affected person to a Certified Stroke Center right away to receive the most effective treatment.

Strokeinfo.org

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Men's Corner: Grill the Healthy Way



From backyard barbecues to block parties, summertime means grill time. Pick your pleasure, gas or charcoal — grilling usually means bratwurst, steaks and burgers. But, this summer, why not add a few new healthy dishes to your menu including poultry, fish fillets, roasted vegetables or even grilled angel food cake?

Choose foods that you already enjoy, yet don't traditionally use for grilling, like poultry, fish, lean meats and vegetables. Here's a sampling of grilling tips and ideas that you'll find on MayoClinic.com:

* Choose white-meat poultry without the skin and lean cuts of meat, such as sirloin, flank or tenderloin. Turn often to avoid overcooking or burning.

* Trim visible fat off meat and remove poultry skin before grilling.

* Marinate meat to add flavor and to keep it tender. Try fat-free salad dressings, low-salt soy sauce, lemon juice or even wine.

* For fish, place thick flanks of fish directly onto the grilling grates. Place thin fish fillets on foil, or in foil packets along with lemons, vegetables and your favorite herbs.

Main-dish alternative: pizza anyone?

Try grilled, cheese less pizzas for a super way to cut fat but not flavor. MayoClinic.com provides easy-to-follow instructions for starting with ready-made pizza crusts and ideas for healthy toppings such as grilled vegetables.

Another healthy idea is to make your next grilled meal meatless. Eggplant, summer squash, bell peppers, sweet onions, small tomatoes, mushrooms, mangoes, pineapples and peaches all work well on the grill. Check out recipes for vegetarian kabobs or ginger-marinated portabella mushrooms for your main dish.

And for dessert, instead of fat-laden ice cream or cake, look to fresh fruits. The dry heat of grilling intensifies and caramelizes the natural sugars in fruit. Favorite fruits on the grill include halves or slices of apricots, peaches, pineapples and nectarines. Or, grill slices of angel food cake and top with chilled strawberries, blueberries or raspberries.

Content from Mayoclinic.com

12 Quick Tips for Eating the Mediterranean Way



Food is far more than sustenance. The dishes we eat are often imbued with family traditions, cultural history and even personal memories—and that's as it should be. But as studies around the world have shown, eating patterns as different from ours as those in Sweden and India can be tweaked to take advantage of the health benefits associated with traditional Mediterranean diets. Here's how:

1. Replace butter with olive or canola oil whenever possible.
2. Snack on nuts, seeds or fruit instead of processed foods.
3. Include a generous leafy green salad with most dinners.
4. Help yourself to whole-grain bread, pasta, rice and other grains.
5. Fix at least a couple of vegetarian meals every week.
6. Add a dish or two that contains legumes (beans and lentils) to your weekly menu.
7. Have fish (not fried) at least twice a week.
8. If you eat meat, favor chicken and other poultry.
9. Eat red meat only occasionally, and in small servings.
10. If you drink, have no more than a glass or two with a meal.
11. Enjoy fruit for dessert.
12. Set aside enough time to savor every bite.

By Peter Jaret, *EatingWell.com*

Putting Out the Fire Tips to prevent heartburn (without medication)



Enjoying one of life's great pleasures is reason enough to linger over a good meal. But new research suggests that eating at a leisurely pace has a much more practical benefit: preventing heartburn.

At the Medical University of South Carolina, 20 volunteers were recently invited to eat a 690-calorie meal consisting of a chicken burger, French fries and a 16-ounce soda on two separate days. The first meal they scarfed down in five minutes flat. The next occasion they consumed the food over a leisurely half hour. Episodes of heartburn were much less likely to occur when people ate slowly. One reason may be that the volunteers chewed more and produced more saliva, which neutralizes stomach acid.

What's on the menu may also make a difference. Researchers at the University Of Arizona College Of Medicine recently found that people who drink carbonated soda are at higher risk of developing heartburn, especially at night. Sodas are high in acid and introduce carbon dioxide into the stomach. Eating foods high in fiber, by contrast, may be protective. In a study published in the journal *Gut*, researchers Hashem El-Serag and his colleagues at the Michael E. DeBakey V.A. Medical Center in Houston, Texas, found that people who consumed the most fiber had a 20 percent lower risk of experiencing serious heartburn. Previous studies have shown that high-fiber diets protect against the risk of cancer of the esophagus. "Fiber may help bind food and especially noxious substances in the stomach and prevent them from escaping back," says El-Serag.

Slowing down and eating more high-fiber foods could fight heartburn in another way. Weight-loss experts have long counseled dieters to eat more slowly so the stomach has time to signal when it's full. There is good evidence that high-fiber diets help people feel full on fewer calories. If that in turn helps people shed pounds, it could also ease heartburn. "Being overweight or obese adds to the risk of gastric reflux because the extra weight puts pressure on the stomach," says El-Serag, "making it more likely that food can be forced back into the esophagus."

Walking can also ease heartburn, says El-Serag, probably simply because it keeps people upright and uses the force of gravity to keep food down. Stretching out on the sofa after a big meal is the worst thing you can do—for more than one reason.

Content by: *Eating Well*



Are Plastic Bottles Dangerous?

Responding to growing consumer concern, sports-bottle maker Nalgene announced that it will be phasing out the use of the chemical bisphenol-A (BPA) in its plastic containers over the coming months.

BPA is a common building block of hard polycarbonate plastics (such as sports bottles, baby bottles, and eye glasses) and is also found in the resin lining of metal food and beverage cans. Because BPA mimics estrogen, there has been increasing concern that exposure, especially by fetuses, newborns, and infants, may cause long-term health impacts such as early puberty in girls, reproductive problems, and cancers later in life.

Nalgene currently makes about a half-dozen different sports bottles, including ones made from stainless steel and also BPA-free plastics. Only one of its six bottle types includes BPA. Customers who wish to buy BPA-free sports bottles before Nalgene's phase-out is complete can visit the Nalgene Choice website to learn more about Nalgene's current BPA-free options.

Canada Plans BPA Ban

The Government of Canada is proposing a ban on polycarbonate baby bottles and strict limits on BPA in infant formula cans. The government is also seeking to work with industry to develop alternative food packaging.

Will the US Follow Suit?

The National Institute of Health's National Toxicology Program (NTP) released its draft brief on BPA, which found that current levels of exposure to the chemical did pose "some concern" for fetuses, infants, and children. The main concerns were that exposures in these groups could potentially cause neural and behavioral problems, impact the prostate and mammary glands, and contribute to earlier onset of puberty in girls.

There are no immediate plans in the U.S. to regulate BPA in food and beverage containers.

The report wasn't intended to make recommendations, says John Bucher, Associate Director of the National Toxicology Program. Rather, the goal was to pull together the literature on the subject, conduct a thorough scientific analysis, and make that information available to regulatory agencies. "All we can do is point out where the exposures are coming from," said Bucher. The two biggest culprits he identified were polycarbonate baby bottles and the linings of infant formula cans.

Although no regulatory agencies are required to take the report's findings into account, Bucher says that some agencies—such as the FDA, the EPA, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission—could choose to use the NTP's findings on BPA. Most likely, these agencies will, at the very least, wait until the draft report has been through a peer review process, which is scheduled for June 11, 2008. Meanwhile, the NTP is accepting public comments about the BPA report.

What Should I Do?

While the NTP does not make specific recommendations about how other agencies should regulate BPA, they did offer the public some tips for reducing personal exposure if they were concerned. These included:

- Don't microwave polycarbonate plastic food containers. Polycarbonate is strong and durable, but over time it may break down from over use at high temperatures.
- Polycarbonate containers that contain BPA usually have a #7 on the bottom.
- Reduce your use of canned foods.
- When possible, opt for glass, porcelain, or stainless steel containers, particularly for hot food or liquids.
- Use baby bottles that are BPA free.

msn health article by Lisa Farino

*Health is not a matter of chance. It is a matter of choice.
It is something we have been gifted with, took for granted
and we can reclaim and regain.*

-Darina Stoyanova

Is Your House Killing You? Avoid the deadly hazards lurking in your home...



Poisoned Produce

How it happens: You already know bird-borne salmonella can kill you. Even if you treat raw poultry like toxic waste when cooking it, you may not be in the clear. While cutlets defrost in the fridge, salmonella can drip onto porous produce.

The fix: When defrosting poultry, cover it with plastic wrap and place it on a plate away from other foods, says Stanley Maloy, Ph.D., associate director of the center for microbial sciences at San Diego State University.

Perilous Pipes

How it happens: You inhale Legionella, pneumonia-inducing bacteria that thrive in water and are found in industrial air-conditioning units and water pipes. The result is Legionnaires' disease, named after a 1976 American Legion convention where the bacteria killed 29 people.

The fix: Every 3 months, crank your hot-water heater above 140°F and run all the faucets on hot for 10 minutes, Maloy says. The heat kills off the bacteria.

Lethal Light bulbs

How it happens: You replace your incandescent light bulbs with more energy-efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL). But when these eco-friendly beacons break, they release mercury gas, a neurotoxin that attacks the nervous system and can cause chronic kidney problems.

The fix: Hold the bulbs by the plastic base, not the glass, when inserting and unscrewing them. Put spent bulbs into the original boxes or in double plastic bags before recycling. No excuses: Ikea stores offer free drop-off.

Putrid Sponges

How it happens: Even when it appears "like new," the sponge you use for wiping the table and washing dishes can harbor 10,000 bacteria per square inch. The Journal of Environmental Health recently suggested microwaving the sponges to kill the bacteria, but hundreds of people have found that dry sponges catch fire when zapped.

The fix: "A great way to disinfect dish sponges is to boil them or throw them in the dishwasher once a week," says Joseph Laquatra, Ph.D., a professor of family policy at Cornell University.

Toxic Furniture

How it happens: Those assembly-required bookshelves may be more trouble than they're worth. Particleboard is glued together with the toxin formaldehyde, the vapors of which irritate the eyes and skin of some people, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The fix: Slap on a coat of varnish to trap the formaldehyde. You'll stave off exposure and maybe convince people you don't have cheapo shelves.

Deadly Soil

How it happens: Your home may be built on soil with dangerous levels of decayed uranium, called radon. "A home is like a vacuum cleaner over soil," says Laquatra. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. (Cigarettes are the first.)

The fix: Conduct a radon test at least every 2 years. If your home fails the test, hire a contractor to install a ventilation pipe that stretches from below the basement floor to the roof. It will siphon off the deadly radon particles - an easy fix for a dangerous problem.

From Men's Health

Super Food of the Month



Not only are avocados a rich source of monounsaturated fatty acids including oleic acid, which has recently been shown to offer significant protection against breast cancer, but it is also a very concentrated dietary source of the carotenoid lutein; it also contains measurable amounts of related carotenoids and a significant amount of tocopherols (vitamin E).

Enjoying a few slices of avocado in your tossed salad, or mixing some chopped avocado into your favorite salsa will not only add a rich, creamy flavor, but will greatly increase your body's ability to absorb the health-promoting carotenoids that vegetables provide.

Use a stainless steel knife to cut the avocado in half lengthwise. Gently twist the two halves in opposite direction if you find the flesh clinging to the pit. Remove the pit, either with a spoon or by spearing with the tip of a knife. Place the halves face down, then peel and slice. If the flesh is too soft to be sliced, just slide a spoon along the inside of the skin and scoop it out. You can prevent the natural darkening of the avocado flesh that occurs with exposure to air by sprinkling with a little lemon juice or vinegar.

Weight Watcher's Recipe of the Month

Mango Avocado Soup

Ingredients:

1 Haas avocado, peeled and seeded, cut in chunks
1 mango, peeled and seeded, cut in chunks
1 cup apple juice, prepared from frozen concentrate
1/2 cup water
1 cup nonfat plain yogurt
2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

Directions:

In a blender, process all ingredients till combined but still slightly chunky. Chill and serve, garnished with chopped chives or green onion tops.

Yield: About 5 cups

2 POINTS per serving

Nutritional Information:

Per cup: 141 calories, 3.7g protein, 20g carbohydrates, 5.4g fiber, 6.4g fat (1g saturated), 44mg sodium.



Important, Common First-Aid Mistakes



Almost everyone has been faced with a medical emergency.

And the first aid measures you take at the scene -- even before you call 911 or head to the emergency room -- could make all the difference.

YOUR CHILD SWALLOWS SOMETHING YOU THINK MAY BE POISONOUS

For years, we were told to use syrup of ipecac, to induce vomiting. That's wrong. The American Academy of Pediatrics and other experts no longer recommend using it. They say there's no evidence that vomiting helps children who have swallowed something poisonous. Most emergency medical facilities have switched to activated charcoal, which binds with the poison in the stomach and prevents it from entering the bloodstream.

So, you should throw out any syrup of ipecac you may have. If a poisoning occurs, immediately call your doctor or poison control center and bring the container of whatever the child ingested to the ER.

BURNS

A lot of people think you treat burns with butter or ice. That's wrong. According to the Mayo Clinic, butter can prevent proper healing and ice can cause frostbite, damaging skin. You also don't want to cover a burn. In addition, if a burn is serious enough to cause blisters, be careful to avoid breaking or puncturing them. Broken blisters leave you vulnerable to infection.

What you SHOULD do is wash the area with cool water and apply antibiotic ointment to mild burns. For burns around sensitive areas such as the eyes or mouth, or any burn that covers an area larger than your hand, see a doctor.

A TOOTH GETS KNOCKED OUT

Many people think that, once a tooth gets knocked out, it's permanent. But, if your tooth gets knocked out, you have a chance of having it re-implanted in your mouth. It's important NOT to try to clean it or handle it by its roots.

According to the American Dental Association, you should quickly pick up the tooth -- by the crown only (the chewing edge) -- and immerse it in whole milk. Yes, that's right -- milk, and go as fast as you can to the dentist or the emergency room. The faster you get there the better the chances the tooth can be successfully re-implanted in your mouth.

NOSEBLEEDS

If you have occasional nosebleeds, you should know NOT to lean back. And after the bleeding has stopped, do not blow your nose or bend over for several hours.

What you SHOULD do is sit upright and lean forward and pinch your nose just below the nasal bone for 5 to 10 minutes. But if the bleeding persists for more than 20 minutes, get medical attention.

By DR. EMILY SENAY, CBS

Upcoming Managed Care Wellness Events:

Thursday, May 8th, 2008: Wellness Lunch and Learn, Introduction to Exercise (Executive Conference Room)

Monday, May 12th, 2008: Final Weigh-in for Weight Loss Challenge

Wednesday, May 14th, 2008: Wellness Grand Rounds (Executive Conference Room)

Wednesday, June 4th, 2008: Wellness Lunch and Learn: Personal Wellness Plan (Executive Conference Room)

Wednesday, June 11th, 2008: Wellness Grand Rounds (Executive Conference Room)