

MANAGED CARE EMPLOYEE WELLNESS NEWSLETTER



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

Ways to Relax This Holiday Season Holiday Stress-Busting Tips



With the shopping and the crowds, the back-to-back diet-busting parties, the interminable chats with the in-laws, it's understandable how easy it is to feel not so wonderful at this most wonderful time of the year.

That's why we've rounded up these expert-endorsed ways to help you dodge the seasonal blues and stay happy, healthy, and energized. From quick stress-survival strategies to mood-brightening foods, here's your cheat sheet to holiday cheer.

Hike your mood with sunlight

It stimulates the production of feel-good serotonin and also helps relieve seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which impacts millions of Americans every year.

Take a whiff of citrus

Researchers studying depression have found that certain citrus fragrances boost feelings of well-being and alleviate stress by upping levels of norepinephrine, a hormone that affects mood.

Walk away from worries

The rhythm and repetition of walking has a tranquilizing effect on your brain, and it decreases anxiety and improves sleep.

Do less, enjoy more

We go overboard to please others during the holidays: shopping, cooking, sending cards, and attending every event - Instead, take care of you by saying no at least once—and maybe more.

Stick with your daily routine to prevent stress and keep your mood stable

Prioritize your workouts, book club, etc., and don't try to squeeze in more holiday than you can handle.

Don't neglect whatever cracks you up

Laughing like crazy reduces stress hormones. That, in turn, helps immune cells function better.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Ways to Relax This Holiday Season	1
How a Flu Shot Can Save Your Life	2
Fight That Flu	2
Help Your Loved Ones Stay Healthy	3
Give Yourself the Best Gift Ever	3
Men's Corner: Drink the Beer, Lose the Gut	4
Tanning Bed Addiction	4
Kid's Health	5
Food of the Month	6
Upcoming Wellness Events	6

How Young is Your Brain?

Like your muscles, your brain gets flabby if you don't exercise it. To find out the best ways to strengthen your brain, take this anti-aging quiz.

1. Which is better for keeping your mind sharp?

- A. Watching a movie with your kids.
- B. Playing Scrabble with your kids.

Answer: B. Interacting with your kids, as opposed to sitting passively on the couch, triggers neural growth.

2. Which prevents you from getting lost?

- A. Taking unfamiliar routes to work, home, and the grocery store.
- B. Taking the same route so it's ingrained in your brain.

Answer: A. Mix it up. Repetitive routines tell your brain that it no longer needs to keep growing.

3. True or False:

Kissing your husband under the mistletoe helps keep your brain young.

Answer: True. Displays of affection can help to strengthen attachments, which may encourage the growth of neurons.

4. As our brains age ...

- A. Cognitive speed and memory decline.
- B. Making friends gets no easier or harder.
- C. The ability to problem-solve improves.

Answer: All of the above. The brain ages in complex ways. To limit the downsides, acquire new hobbies and find healthy ways to manage stress.

How a Flu Shot Can Save Your Life



Forget about shunning the sniffles, getting your annual flu shot can reduce your risk of developing a life-threatening blood clot.

The finding comes from an American Heart Association study in which researchers surveyed 727 patients with a history of VTE (deep vein thrombosis) or pulmonary embolism with an equal number of controls over the course of five years.

Within that time, patients younger than 52 were 48 percent less likely to form a blood clot if they had received regular flu shots. In women under the age of 51, the risk reduction rose to 50 percent. And women younger than 51 taking birth control pills or estrogen replacement therapy took the cake—with a risk reduction of 59 percent.

While the researchers can only speculate as to the causes for the correlation, a popular theory is that influenza can increase systemic inflammation, including blood clots.

Since the vaccine isn't 100 percent effective, paying attention to warnings that people in your home, office, or even state are coming down with the flu can help protect you as well. And check this out: Google's new tool called Google Flu Trends monitors online flu-related searches to pinpoint the sites of influenza outbreaks.

By tracking online searches rather than flu-related doctors' visits, Google Flu Trends can alert you of an outbreak in your area up to two weeks before the Center for Disease Control and Prevention can, meaning you have a better chance of staying flu—and blood clot—free this winter.



Fight That Flu!

'Tis the season of sore throats and runny noses - Here are four experts' top tips for staying healthy

The Family Doctor says

"Get plenty of sleep to strengthen your immune system and eat warm, home-cooked meals [especially veggie-rich stews and chicken soup] to keep up your strength."

The Holistic Doctor says

"Eat organic produce. Your immune system won't waste energy trying to fight off the toxins that are sprayed on conventional fruits and vegetables."

The Nutritionist says

"Eat lots of zinc to promote the production of white blood cells, critical for fending off colds. Good sources are low-fat yogurt and whole grains."

The Personal Trainer says

"Drink plenty of water — staying hydrated will keep your mucous membranes moist and prevent viruses from entering your system. And exercise! It strengthens your immune system."

Help Your Loved Ones Stay Healthy

Random Acts of Fitness, Nutrition and Health



If you're not comfortable with talking to loved ones about the touchy subjects of health and weight loss, you can still help them lead healthier lives by practicing "random acts of fitness." There are dozens of small things you can do every day to make healthy living as easy as possible. Sometimes, you end up helping create good habits without them even realizing it.

And in the true spirit of being a positive force, when you give your time and energy with any of these random acts, you get just as much in return.

Some ideas (in random order of course):

- Keep a variety of foods in the kitchen.
- Make sure you talk to them about other things besides weight loss and fitness.
- Stock kitchen with healthy cookbooks, leaving them where people can find them.
- Get the junk food out of the house.
- Plan an active activity after dinner.
- Make it a habit to play outdoor games together.
- Plan a cooking date.
- Cook at least three times a week for the household.
- If you already cook, cook healthier foods for the family.
- Maintain an upbeat attitude.
- Get a physical and urge them to do the same.
- Give "active" gifts, like personal training packages, a bicycle, roller blades, etc.
- Make a bet.
- Use positive language all the time.
- Be straight up and let them know you're concerned about their health.
- Opt for activities as an excuse to spend time together.
- Turn off the TV and hide the remote.
- Give big, positive attention to changes that are made.
- If it's your turn to pick, choose a healthy restaurant or one that's within walking distance.

Give Yourself the Best Gift Ever – A "Holiday Do Over"

How about resolving to see the holidays in a whole new way – as an opportunity to celebrate togetherness, be grateful for what we already have, and if possible, give to those in need?

A "holiday do over" helps us take the emphasis off eating, drinking and spending too much. Just like the physical do over you've heard me discuss; where you re-generate your body through healthier lifestyle choices, you can do the same with the holidays...you can even do both! Remember, it's only too late to change your life when you are six feet under!

Dr. Roizen's ForTheHealthofft

"It's hard to beat a person that never gives up."
- Babe Ruth

Men's Corner: Drink the Beer, Lose the Gut

Find out the most satisfying beers for fewer than 150 calories



Most light beers save only about 20 to 50 calories per bottle—and some even outweigh regular beers. Want maximum taste, minimum guilt? Consult our guide to the best beers under 150 calories.

Guinness Draught Bottle (4.2 percent alcohol)

Calories: 125

Carbohydrates: 9.9 grams (g)

Foods it goes best with: Creamy, mild taste plays well with shellfish and soups.

Taste test: "Smoky flavor with hints of coffee - Breakfast, anyone?"

Yuengling Premium (4.4 percent alcohol)

Calories: 150

Carbohydrates: 12 g

Foods it goes best with: Hoppy, sweet notes blend best with barbecue or pan-Asian foods.

Taste test: "A little bitter and a little sweet, like my relationship with my ex."

Sol Cerveza Especial (4 percent alcohol)

Calories: 127

Carbohydrates: 10 g

Foods it goes best with: Its light body and fizzy texture are the perfect foil for spicy fare, like jalapeño-heaped nachos.

Taste test: "Tastes like a Mexican Budweiser. Can someone snag some nachos and a lime?"

Victory Lager (4.8 percent alcohol)

Calories: 138

Carbohydrates: 11 g

Foods it goes best with: This crisp lager cleanses the palate after a burger.

Taste test: "A little hops-heavy at first, but the taste grows on you."

Winner

New Belgium Skinny Dip (4.2 percent alcohol)

Calories: 110

Carbohydrates: 7 g

Foods it goes best with: This bright, light beer pairs nicely with chicken and fruit

Taste test: "A good beer for kicking back after a long day of hard work."

Tanning Bed Addiction



Attention, dark-side devotees: Many young people are addicted to tanning, a study in the *American Journal of Health Behavior* reports.

A survey asking 400 college students about their baking habits found that 27 percent had withdrawal symptoms when they tried to cut back, says lead study author Carolyn Heckman, Ph.D., of the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia.

Young frequent fryers are more likely to keep tanning as they get older. "And studies show that women, particularly those who tan indoors, develop skin cancers earlier," Heckman says.

Use self-tanners to brown. And if you're a blue-bed addict, consider counseling.

Kids' Health: TV, Internet Causing Kids Harm: Media in general is boosting rates of obesity, and other woes

There's a strong link between media exposure and childhood obesity, smoking and sexual activity, according to U.S. researchers who reviewed 173 studies on media and health conducted over the past three decades.

According to the review, 80 percent of the studies concluded that higher amounts of television and other media exposure were associated with negative health effects in children and adolescents. The strongest association was between media and obesity. Of the 73 studies that examined media/childhood weight, 86 percent showed a significant association between increased media exposure and obesity.

The findings, by researchers from Yale University School of Medicine, the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the California Pacific Medical Center, were released Tuesday by Common Sense Media, a nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the impact of media and entertainment on children and families.

"This review is the first-ever comprehensive evaluation of the many ways that media impacts children's physical health," lead researcher Dr. Ezekiel J. Emanuel, of the NIH, said in a news release.

"The results clearly show that there is a strong correlation between media exposure and long-term negative health effects to children. This study provides an important jumping-off point for future research that should explore both the effects of traditional media content and that of digital media -- such as video games, the Internet, and cell phones -- which kids are using today with more frequency," Emanuel said.

He and his colleagues recommend that parents limit their children's exposure to media and make wise, age-appropriate decisions for their children. There should be media literacy programs in schools, the researchers said, and policy makers need to make media education programs a national priority.

"Media is increasingly pervasive in the lives of children and adolescents," James P. Steyer, Common Sense Media founder and CEO, said in a group news release. "Parents and educators must consider the effects of media when they're trying to address issues with their child's health. This report makes it clear that we need a bold new agenda on media and technology use. We hope this report will create a new sense of urgency in that regard."

Take the Ouch Out of Shots!



Want to make your child's next round of shots less tearful? Doctors say distractions do the trick.

Apologizing for the hurt -- parents' most common response to their child's discomfort when getting a shot -- actually increases some youngsters' distress, research has found. Far more helpful is diverting their attention with a story, joke, song, or toy. And for babies, a pacifier may help distract them from the pain of a needle stick. Save the comforting talk until after the injection.

-RealAge.com

Recipe of the Month: Lemon-Lime Cookie Crisps

Ingredients:

3 1/3 tbsp unsalted butter
 1/2 cup sugar
 2 large egg white(s)
 1/3 cup(s) cake flour
 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
 2 tsp lemon zest
 2 tsp lime zest



Preheat oven to 350°F. Place parchment paper on 2 cookie sheets.

Using an electric mixer, cream butter and sugar in a medium bowl until light and fluffy. Add egg white and stir until just blended. Sift cake flour over butter mixture and mix with a spoon; fold in vanilla.

Remove half of batter and place in a medium bowl; set aside. Fold lemon zest into one bowl and lime zest into other bowl.

Drop heaping teaspoons of batter onto prepared cookie sheets leaving at least 3-inches between each cookie. When cookie sheet is full, flatten out cookies with back of a spoon so cookies look almost translucent and measure about 3-inches across. (You may have to do this in batches depending on the size of your cookie sheets.)

Bake until edges start to brown, about 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from oven and quickly transfer cookies to a cooling rack using a thin metal spatula. Yields 4 cookies per serving.

Points: 2

WeightWatchers.com

Food of the Month: Lemon and Lime

Although lemons and limes may not be what you would choose for an afternoon snack, we consider them as powerhouses when we want to bring out the flavor of other foods.

Lemons and limes contain unique flavonoid compounds that have antioxidant and anti-cancer properties. In addition to their unique phytonutrient properties, lemons and limes are an excellent source of vitamin C, one of the most important antioxidants in nature.

Vitamin C travels through the body neutralizing any free radicals with which it comes into contact in the aqueous environments in the body both inside and outside cells. Free radicals can interact with the healthy cells of the body, damaging them and their membranes, and also cause a lot of inflammation, or painful swelling, in the body. This is one of the reasons that vitamin C has been shown to be helpful for reducing some of the symptoms of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

Vitamin C is also vital to the function of a strong immune system. The immune system's main goal is to protect you from illness, so a little extra vitamin C may be useful in conditions like colds, flu's, and recurrent ear infections.

WHfoods.com



Upcoming Managed Care Wellness Events:

December 10, 2008: 12-1pm, Wellness Grand Rounds, Executive Conference Room

December 11, 2008: 12-1pm, Healthy Holiday Hors D'oeuvres Potluck, Executive Conference Room

January 7, 2009: 12-1pm, Wellness Lunch and Learn: Rebecca Bailey – Exercise science, Executive Conference Room

February 4, 2009: 12-1pm Wellness Lunch and Learn, Dr. Kennedy & Jill Fisher – FYI Program, Executive Conference Room