

TOPHEALTH[®]

The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter

JUNE 2011

Keen on Beans

Beans are an amazing superfood: They're packed with nutrients and fiber and are very low-fat. Including beans in your diet is easy with a little know-how:

How to pick 'em

Over time, dried beans can toughen and lose their flavor. Look for clean whole beans with a slight sheen, a bright color and a minimum of cracks. Beans come in a variety of colors and flavors. Red beans hold their shape well and are good for bean salads; garbanzos have a sweet, nutty taste and can be mashed into a dense, creamy consistency; and adzukis have a slightly meaty flavor, are easy to digest and don't require soaking.

How to soak 'em

Discard discolored or shriveled beans along with any foreign matter, then rinse. Most varieties need presoaking, so try one of these methods:

➤ **Quick and Easy** - Bring 10 cups of water to a boil. Add one pound of beans and return to a boil for 2 to 3 minutes, then cover and set aside for 1 hour at room temperature. To diminish the gas-producing properties of beans, cook as above, set aside overnight and drain before cooking.

➤ **Overnight Method** - In a pot, cover one pound of beans with 10 cups of cold water, cover and refrigerate for 8 hours.

How to cook 'em

Cover soaked beans with three times their volume of water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer uncovered until tender.

For a printable cooking guide and recipes, go to www.cag.uconn.edu/nutsci/nutsci and search for "bean magic." For maximum tenderness, avoid adding salt and acidic ingredients until beans are cooked.



"Those who think they have no time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness."

~Edward Stanley

The Daily Stretch

Being flexible gives you the freedom to do the things you need and want to do. Daily stretching is a great way to increase flexibility, improve the range of motion in your joints (which also helps balance), increase circulation and relieve stress. It's also easy to perform at home, at work or while traveling, even for beginners. **Start with these stretching essentials:**

Warm up first.

Gently stretch after 10 minutes of a low-intensity exercise, such as walking.

Target major muscle groups

such as calves, thighs, lower back and shoulders and problem areas. Focus also on any areas of chronic tightness.

Keep it

pain-free. You should feel tension but not discomfort while you're stretching. If it hurts, ease up until the pain disappears.

Don't bounce or jerk your muscles. This can tear them and lead to scar tissue as the muscle heals. Scar tissue can tighten muscles, reduce flexibility and cause pain.

Inhale and exhale through the stretches to make them deeper and more effective.

Be smart. If you have an injury or chronic condition, ask your healthcare provider or physical therapist how to stretch safely.

Get started: Go to www.exercisemedicine.org/keys.htm and click on "flexibility" for video examples of various stretches. Pick the ones that work for you.



Had it with headaches? See page 2 for how to prevent the pain.

Tetanus: Closer Than You Think?

FACT: Approximately 30 percent of tetanus infections result from yard work and farming. Infections can enter the bloodstream through even the tiniest cut, scrape or splinter. Gloves and clothing provide some protection, but the only sure-fire defense is to get a tetanus shot every 10 years. **Be smart:** Make sure your immunizations are up to date.





Handling Headaches

Headaches, especially tension and migraine headaches, are the most common source of pain for children and adults alike. Fortunately, a lot can be done to prevent and manage them.

Which type of headache do you have? Tension headaches cause a constant ache or pressure on both sides or back of the head or neck. In contrast, migraines involve an intense, even debilitating throbbing, sometimes accompanied by nausea/vomiting or sensitivity to light. Headaches can also be a combination of the two.

Do you know your triggers? Consider tracking your symptoms to identify which factors are provoking your headaches. A printable log is available at www.achenet.org/tools/diaries/index.asp.

What are the common culprits?

- 1 **Stress.** Learn to relax with deep breathing, meditation or progressive muscle relaxation. Make changes to reduce pressure in your life. If you suffer from chronic anxiety or depression, consult an experienced psychotherapist.
- 2 **Lack of sleep, exercise or meals.** Develop a regular sleep and exercise schedule and get at least 7 hours of shut-eye. Try relaxation tapes for insomnia. Keep nutritious snacks handy, and eat several small meals/snacks a day.
- 3 **Poor ergonomics and eyestrain.** These are common in office workers. For corrective measures, see www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/checklist.html. Try exercises to strengthen neck and back muscles.
- 4 **Food/caffeine.** Cheese, red wine and products containing nitrites or nitrates can be problematic for some. Headaches can occur from excess caffeine or caffeine withdrawal.
- 5 **Other factors.** Hair accessories, warm weather and strong smells such as perfume or smoke can also prompt a headache.

Rarely, a headache indicates a more serious problem. Seek immediate care for headaches occurring with head injury, stiff neck, fever, confusion, loss of consciousness or pain in the eye area, or a headache that is sudden, severe, persistent or worsening.



Energy Drinks: Not for Kids

A recent article in the journal *Pediatrics* suggests that energy drinks can be dangerous for children and teens. Some of these products have four to five times more caffeine than soda, as well as other ingredients that can intensify caffeine's effects. Potential dangers include heart palpitations, seizures, strokes and even death. Encourage your kids to use natural pick-me-ups such as increased sleep and exercise and safe drinks such as water, seltzers or 100 percent fruit juices.

Know Your Numbers: Calories Count, Count Calories

The number of calories needed to maintain your weight depends on several factors, including your age, gender and activity level.



Example: Women 31 to 50 years old need up to 1,800 calories daily if they are sedentary ... men in this category need up to 2,200.

What is sedentary?

The American Heart Association defines it as having a lifestyle that includes only the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life. You can find more specific information in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (2010, Chapter 2).

Smart moves for your personal wellness program are at www.personalbest.com/extras/june11tools.



LONGEVITY CORNER

Sleeping Beauty. Research from Sweden shows that when you're sleep-deprived, it shows. Photos were taken of 23 study subjects, half of them after 8 hours of sleep and the other half after being kept awake for 31 hours. Untrained observers found the sleep-deprived group less healthy and attractive-looking. **Want to look good?** Keep fit but also get 7 to 8 hours of shut-eye.

— Zorba Paster, MD

NEXT MONTH: THE VITAMIN D-BATE