

# TOPHEALTH®

We Care About Your Health

The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter

MARCH 2011

## Nutrition Watch: Quick Guide to Crowd Pleasers

This month, put health in action by redesigning your menus with good nutrition in mind. You can get the most bang for your grocery buck with some planning, a little kitchen know-how and some smart shopping. *Here's how:*

- 1. PACK in the produce.** Buy fruit in season, choose canned fruit without added sugar, or shop for fruit in the frozen food section. Keep frozen vegetables on hand.
- 2. FILL up on beans and lentils.** They're an economical and nutrition-packed choice — great as an entrée, for a side dish or as the bulk of soup or chili.
- 3. MAKE the most of leftover lean meats and poultry.** Add affordable brown rice or whole grain pasta at dinner, or slice meats for a hearty sandwich.
- 4. MIX up a soup or stew.** Nutritious, satisfying and convenient, soups are great for multiple meals. With a low-sodium beef or chicken broth base, add what's handy — vegetables, beans, lentils, whole-wheat pasta or brown rice along with leftover meat or poultry.



## Uncovering a FOOD ALLERGY

Though only a few have true food allergies, one out of three people believe they or a family member have one.

**WHY?** Many of the same symptoms (abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, asthma) can arise from a food allergy, which involves an immune reaction, or from a food intolerance, which does not. Non-allergic food reactions can occur from food poisoning, histamine-containing foods, lactose intolerance, food additives, gluten intolerance or certain conditions of the gastrointestinal tract.

**YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER** can help you determine if you have a true allergy or food intolerance. The first steps are a detailed patient history with questions such as "Do you always react after eating this food?" or "Did antihistamines help?" and a physical exam.

(continued next page)



What rare cancer has become more common and why?

## IN A BLINK: Treating Dry Eyes

Tears are critical to eye health. In addition to lubricating the eye, they protect it from infections and provide vital nutrients. When tears are too few or of the wrong consistency, eye damage and discomfort can occur — a condition called dry eye.



**With dry eye, you may feel burning, scratching or stinging.** You may also have strained or tired eyes after even short periods of reading or computer work, and contact lenses will feel more uncomfortable. Left untreated, dry eye can cause abrasions on the eye which lead to pain, ulcers or scars on the cornea and sometimes loss of vision.

**Simple home treatments may help.** Try over-the-counter artificial tear drops, and use a humidifier (especially in winter). Avoid smoke, direct wind or air conditioning. Adding an air cleaner to filter out dust and particles can also help.

**Dry eye can be temporary or chronic.** If self-care doesn't help in a few days, see an eye specialist. If you also experience dry mouth, joint pain or swelling, eye injury or red and painful eyes, or you have eye discharge or a lesion, get medical help right away.

**TEARS OF JOY:** Treating dry eye early can protect your vision and keep your eyes healthy and comfortable.

## LONGEVITY CORNER

**Fishy Claims.** For several years, supplement manufacturers have suggested that daily fish oil will decrease postpartum depression and increase the IQ of babies. A recent study of more than 2,000 women published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found no such benefit. On the other hand, fish oil supplements are safe, well tolerated and heart-healthy. **The "net" result:** Fish oil may be good for you, but it probably won't make your baby smarter.

— Zorba Paster, MD



"Let your food be your medicine and your medicine be your food."  
~ Hippocrates



Tools for helping you reach your personal best are at [www.personalbest.com/extras/march2011tools](http://www.personalbest.com/extras/march2011tools).

## A Rare Cancer Becomes MORE COMMON

**Once considered** a disease of the over-50 crowd, colorectal cancer is on the rise in younger adults. Rectal cancer has been rising by approximately 3 percent a year in the under-50 age group. Though this amounts to a small number of new patients, it's still a real and significant increase.

**Diagnosing rectal cancer** in people under 50 is tricky, as they are not commonly screened. Also, these individuals are more likely to attribute symptoms to hemorrhoids or lesser problems instead of seeking prompt medical treatment. As a result, rectal cancer becomes more deadly.

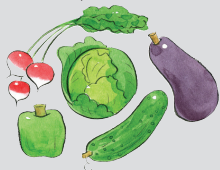
**Though researchers** still don't know what's causing this increase, there are steps you can take now that could lower your risk:

**TALK** to your health care provider about screening, especially if this cancer runs in your family or you have ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease or diabetes.

**AIM** for a healthy body weight and stay physically active. Eat a diet that is low in fat and high in fiber.

**AVOID** smoking and excessive drinking.

**Protect the children:** Other studies have linked childhood obesity with colon cancer later in life. Encourage a good diet, ample exercise and weight control to ensure a healthy future.



## Food Allergy *(continued)*

**KEEPING A LOG** of foods and symptoms can also single out suspect foods. Or, you may be asked to try an elimination diet, where you avoid the suspected food. Blood and skin tests can help identify food allergies, although a positive result doesn't always mean you have an allergy. Skin tests can't be used in some instances, such as when people have severe eczema or are severely allergic. Only the oral food challenge can definitively diagnose a food allergy, according to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. In this test, specific foods are avoided and then reintroduced under medical supervision.

**POSITIVE RESULTS:** If you're diagnosed with a food allergy, contact your local hospital for information and support groups.



## Fitness at Work

Many of us sit longer than our bodies were designed for, reducing blood circulation and productivity, and straining the back, shoulders and neck. Despite a hectic work schedule, you can support your fitness goals with mini-workouts for:

### Flexibility

- Starting with feet flat, raise and lower your heels. Next, switch to lifting your toes. Finish with ankle rolls.

- In a chair, stretch both arms over your head and hold, then extend one hand higher than the other and switch.

### Strength

- Do bicep curls or extensions with a resistance band or filled water bottle.

- Try desk pushups. Facing

**More ideas** → See a physical therapist or personal trainer.

Exercise software and apps are available too. As always, check with your health care provider before starting any new exercise program.



your desk, place your hands at shoulder width and slowly lift and lower your torso toward the desk.

### Heart function

- While seated, rapidly tap your feet on the floor for 30 seconds.

- Walking is better than standing, which is better than sitting. Get a phone headset so you can walk while you chat, or use the stairs to go to the restroom on a different floor.

## HEALTH CARE CONSUMER TIP

What can you do to help keep health care costs down? Visit emergency rooms for emergencies only. Hospital ERs provide great care for real emergencies. But for nonemergencies (such as a sore throat or lower back pain), visit your health care provider or an urgent care facility instead.

## Tips for Joyful Living

When people think about what would make them happier, they often envision a new house, a new job or some other happy major life change. But there are ways to brighten your day easily and inexpensively. The more of them you try, the better you're likely to feel. **Give these a try:**

- **Sensory pleasures.** These include the smell of fresh-baked bread, a massage or a bubble bath.

- **Giving to others.** Easily overlooked, but often very powerful, these are activities such as doing a chore for your neighbor, telling a favorite teacher how much he or she helped you or volunteering at a charity fundraiser.

- **Interconnections.** You could organize a block party, attend a religious service or contact long-lost roommates or co-workers. Keep your focus on the here and now. If your mind wanders, bring it back to the activity.

**Think of your own ideas — these are just the beginning.**