Kettlebell Craze

If you’re looking to get more out of your exercise routine, a kettlebell workout might be just right for you. Originating in Russia in the early 1700s, this workout is coming back into fashion, as it combines cardio and strength training.

What are kettlebells? They are cannonball-shaped iron spheres with handles that you lift or swing. They come in various sizes: Men typically start with 15 to 25 lbs. and women start with 8 to 15 lbs.

What’s the workout like? You target different muscle groups with a series of moves, doing several reps of each and recovering for 30 seconds between moves. For best results, perform the routine two to three times a week. As you get stronger and more skilled, you can add reps, decrease recovery time or increase weight to challenge your body, as long as you maintain proper body alignment and exercise technique. Be sure to stretch and warm up before and after each session.

How does it compare with lifting weights? Kettlebell workouts can be higher-intensity and more aerobic than standard weight-training routines, which is useful for weight loss.

What else do I need to know? These workouts are intense, so speak with your health care provider if you have any health conditions, back or joint problems, or have not exercised for awhile. Consider trying a class to learn proper technique and avoid injury. For more information, type in “kettlebells” at www.acefitness.org.

Beat the Salad Blahs

Would you like to eat more greens but find salads a bit boring? Turn a basic salad into an appetizing feast with a little creativity.

Beat the Salad Blahs

GET FRESH. Bottled salad dressings are quick, but why not whip up a fresh batch? It’s easy with a small food processor or blender. Put all fresh ingredients and vinegar (or citrus juice) in first, then start the processor and slowly add oil. Use roughly one part vinegar to three parts oil. Experiment with different oils (walnut, avocado, sesame); add a touch of highly flavored oils (garlic, toasted sesame, smoked olive) for extra kick. Use balsamic, sherry, red wine, rice or flavored vinegars instead of the standard white.

ADD NEW GARNISHES. Move beyond cucumbers, tomatoes and carrots by adding edamame (fresh soybeans), diced beets, green onion, fruit, hearts of palm, artichoke hearts, flavored nuts, sunflower seeds, bean sprouts, water chestnuts, sliced olives, roasted peppers or fresh herbs (basil, dill, parsley or chives).
HELP FOR HEADACHES

No one likes having headaches, and it can be tough to get rid of the pain once it starts. That’s why it’s even better to prevent headaches by identifying and avoiding triggers. Strategies that may help some headache sufferers include:

➤ Get the right amount of sleep (typically 6-8 hours) seven nights a week.

➤ Eat at least three meals a day with protein, fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Skipping meals or consuming large amounts of sugar can lead to headaches triggered by blood sugar fluctuations.

➤ Get a moderate amount of exercise on a consistent basis. Exercise may be as effective as drugs at preventing migraines.

➤ Drink plenty of water — dehydration can trigger headaches.

➤ If you work at a desk, maintain good posture and avoid eyestrain.

➤ Limit caffeine, alcohol and other drugs. Withdrawal from caffeine is a well-known trigger.

➤ Practice relaxation techniques (such as meditation) and good stress management strategies.

➤ Avoid extreme heat or cold, bright or flashing lights (including strong sunlight), smog, smoke, perfume and other chemical vapors.

➤ Be aware of possible hormonal triggers for women, including birth control pills, hormone replacement therapy, menopause and menstrual periods.

➤ Notice whether headaches are triggered by certain foods, such as aged cheese, red wine, processed meats or MSG.

DEAR DIARY: Keeping a log of your headaches and their possible triggers may help you reduce the number of headaches and the amount of pain medication you take.

TRAVEL & MEDICATION

When traveling, remember that most medications should be kept at temperatures between 59-86 degrees F, although many drugs require storage at temperatures of 68-77 degrees F for optimal quality and effectiveness. If you’re traveling by car, keep drugs in the glove compartment, not the trunk; when flying, stow them in carry-on luggage. Pay particular attention if labels warn about proper storage temperature (for example, insulin needs refrigeration). When ordering prescriptions online, be sure that heat-sensitive items are packaged with coolants.

LONGEVITY CORNER

PRACTICE YOUR ABCS

The U.S. Department of Health just announced a new initiative called ABCS (Aspirin, Blood Pressure, Cholesterol and Smoking) — a program that could prevent 1 million strokes and heart attacks next year. Do your part with these four steps:

➊ If you’re not on ASPIRIN, ask your doctor about it. If you’re over age 50, chances are aspirin could benefit you.

➋ If your BLOOD PRESSURE is above 120/80, you may need two or three prescription drugs to bring it under control. Generic versions of these medications make them more affordable than ever.

➌ Check your CHOLESTEROL every year or two. Eat better and exercise, and if that’s not enough to improve your numbers, consider a statin drug — they work.

➍ If you SMOKE, quit. It takes many smokers 6 to 8 attempts at quitting to succeed. Be the little engine that could and try again.

NEXT MONTH: How to Manage Pelvic Pain

Smart moves for your personal wellness program are at www.personalbest.com/extras/march12tools.