People with asthma can be sensitive to many things that can make breathing difficult, sometimes severe enough to require emergency treatment.

Allergic asthma is the most common type of asthma. Symptoms occur by inhaling allergens, such as pollen, dust mites and animal dander. Once these allergens get into your airways, your immune system overreacts, causing your airways to tighten and become inflamed.

Non-allergic asthma is triggered by factors such as polluted air, stress and exercise that do not involve the immune system.

Both allergic and non-allergic asthma share these common irritants:
- Smoke from tobacco and fires
- Dust and air pollution
- Strong chemical odors or fumes
- Perfume, air fresheners or other scented products

The symptoms of both allergic and non-allergic asthma are generally the same and may include shortness of breath, rapid breathing, coughing, wheezing and chest tightening.

Best ways to manage asthma:

1. Learn to avoid your asthma triggers. For instance, maybe you can improve indoor air by eliminating tobacco smoke or chemical odors. If you have asthma, you should not smoke.

2. Take your medication properly. Asthma medicines provide emergency relief and long-term control.

Follow a care plan developed by you and your health care provider. Don’t let asthma restrict your breathing – and your life.
Cooking With Oil?
Learn about smoke points.
By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Dietary fat is an essential part of a balanced diet. When it comes to your health, some fats are better than others. Cooking oils, for example, are lower in saturated fat than solid fats, such as lard or butter, making them good choices for your heart.

Oil is most beneficial when it’s consumed in moderation. For most healthy people, the daily oil allowance is 1 to 2 tablespoons (depending on age, gender and physical activity level).

Choosing the right oil for each cooking method is often tricky. It helps to know the oil’s smoke point – that’s the temperature at which oil begins to break down when heated. At this point oil can smoke, develop a heavy flavor and lose nutritional value. Following is a guide for matching some oils to common cooking methods.

Oils with a high smoke point of more than 445°F are suitable for hot cooking such as sautéing, frying, roasting and grilling. These oils include:
- Sunflower
- High oleic safflower and canola
- Corn
- Peanut

Oils with a mid-range smoke point from 360°F to 425°F are suitable for culinary uses such as sautéing at medium-high heat. Plus, their neutral flavors make them suitable for baking:
- Canola
- Walnut
- Soybean

Some oils, including extra virgin olive and sesame, are best when heated at a very low temperature (no more than 350°F). Plus, their robust flavors add richness to sauces and salad dressing. You also can use them as finishing oils on sautéed vegetables, pasta or salads. Note: Flax and hemp oils are unsuitable for heat and should only be used cold.

May marks Employee Health and Fitness Month.

On your next work break, why not gather your coworkers and head outdoors for a lunchtime walk? The buddy system is the best way to stay motivated to exercise. Along with smart eating, walking 30 minutes a day can earn you major improvements in weight loss, energy, mood and stress control as well as disease prevention.

“Health is a relationship between you and your body.” – Terri Guillemets

If a long flight is on your horizon, prepare. Recent research shows once you cross several time zones you’re more likely to get respiratory infections and have stomach distress. Make sure you hydrate and eat healthfully, especially before and during travel. Make sure you get enough sleep the night before you leave and the day you arrive. And if you can, an afternoon nap may make things right.

~ Zorba Paster, MD

For Better Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, also called hypertension, is a primary risk factor for heart disease and stroke. A third of Americans have high blood pressure (HBP), and more than half of them do not have it under control.

Factors that impact blood pressure:

Medication: Most patients are prescribed medication to help control their HBP. If your BP is not under control or you have side effects from your medicine, see your health care provider without delay.

Weight: One of the easiest ways to lower BP is weight loss. People who shed just a few pounds are often able to avoid medication or reduce the dose.

Exercise: Exercising 30 to 60 minutes 3 to 4 days a week can significantly decrease moderately elevated BP. In fact, regular exercise may lower BP as much as medicine. Note: Get your provider’s approval before significantly increasing your exercise routine.

Emotional stress: It makes your arteries constrict and your blood pressure rise temporarily. Chronic anger, anxiety and depression can damage your blood vessels, heart and kidneys in ways that raise your risk for long-term HBP.

Snoring: The Journal of Sleep Medicine (10/15/12) reported that men who use CPAP therapy for obstructive sleep apnea (severe snoring) had significant sustained decreases in BP readings. (CPAP stands for continuous positive airway pressure. Mild air pressure is used to keep the airways open during sleep.)

Keep watch on your blood pressure. It can also quickly improve by addressing the factors noted above.

Smart Moves toolkit is at www.personalbest.com/extras/May13tools. Next Month: Balance Training

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