

TOP HEALTH[®]

We Care About Your Health

The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter

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■ DR. ZORBA'S LONGEVITY CORNER

MIND OVER MATTER New research published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* shows that psychological factors may help predict diabetes. The study looked at nearly 5,000 people aged 65 and older who didn't have diabetes at the outset. They were asked a series of questions about calorie intake, stress, sleep and mood. Those who didn't get enough sleep, were stressed out or were depressed were more likely to develop diabetes. So if you suffer from these problems, try seeking help now to lower your risk of becoming diabetic.

Back in Action

Research on back pain shows that continuing daily activities — to the extent pain allows — will help you recover faster than bed rest. These moves can help minimize discomfort and prevent flare-ups:

Sitting. Use a chair that supports your lower back; add a small pillow or cushion if that helps. Keep your head and shoulders erect. Adjust your seat height so you don't have to lean forward.

Standing. If you stand for long periods, rest one foot on a low footstool to relieve pressure on your lower back.

Tying shoes. Avoid bending at the waist. Get down on one knee to tie one shoe, then switch knees to tie the other.

Getting out of bed. Swing one leg at a time over the edge of the bed, then use your elbows to raise yourself up to a sitting position. Gently lower your feet to the floor and stand up.

(continued on next page)

PAIN IN THE SHOULDER BLADE or upper back is a classic pre-heart attack symptom — occurring up to four to six months or even a week before a heart attack. *Others include:* unusual fatigue, sleep disturbance, shortness of breath, chest pain, indigestion and anxiety. If you've been experiencing one or more of these symptoms and are concerned, talk to your health care provider.



7 Ways to Control Cholesterol

Your body needs cholesterol, a soft, waxy substance essential to cell and hormone formation and other biochemical processes. But too much cholesterol can lead to heart disease. *Here's the smart approach to keeping it under control.*

1 Read food labels. Choose foods that are low in saturated fats, trans fats (a type of saturated fat often found in processed foods) and cholesterol. *Good news:* Food manufacturers are now required to list trans fat amounts, and many are taking measures to eliminate trans fats altogether.

2 Know your numbers. Get a fasting lipoprotein profile to find out what your total cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol and triglyceride numbers are. Talk to your health care provider about any numbers outside the healthy range and what actions you should take.

3 Choose the right stuff. Eat mostly plant-based foods — only animal foods contain cholesterol — and other cholesterol-free foods. Use healthy oils such as olive or canola oil for cooking; they may lower LDL and raise HDL levels. Eat more fish and opt for lean cuts of meat and poultry. (continued on next page)



"Everyone has a doctor in him or her; we just have to help it in its work." — Hippocrates

LEARN — AND BE HEALTHY

You may be exercising your body, but what about your mind? Studies by the National Institute of Aging show that staying active mentally and socially is important to maintaining health as you age. *So develop the lifelong learner in you:*



◆ **START a new hobby.** You'll acquire new knowledge and skills while giving yourself some playtime to reduce the stress in your life. Collecting, woodworking, learning a musical instrument, gourmet cooking, painting, photography, acting — there's a pastime for everyone.

◆ **TAKE a class.** Check out a local adult education center and choose an evening or weekend class about a topic or skill you've always been interested in. You'll not only stimulate your mind, you'll also meet like-minded people and may form new friendships.

◆ **JOIN a book group.** Book discussion groups are everywhere and usually meet monthly. *To find one:* Ask friends, family or co-workers for recommendations, or check with your local library.

◆ **CHALLENGE your mind.** From such classics as word games and crossword puzzles to newer passions, such as Sudoku number puzzles and Texas Hold'em, games get your brain firing on all cylinders. And they're fun! Lifelong learning can help keep your thinking sharp and your outlook young. And it just may keep you healthier.

Caffeine Ups and Downs

That cup of coffee or tea can help you feel more alert and energetic. But can you get too much caffeine?

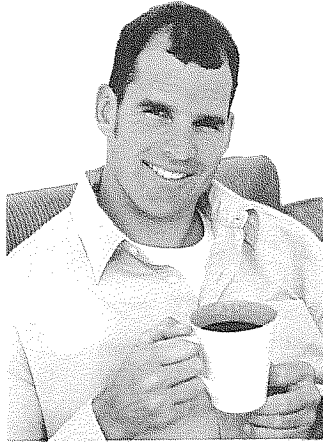
Most people can drink two to three cups of brewed coffee a day, about 200 to 300 mg of caffeine, without suffering harmful effects. But doubling those amounts can affect your health and cause problems ranging from restlessness, anxiety, irritability and insomnia to muscle tremors, headaches, stomach problems and abnormal heart rhythms.

If caffeine has been bothering you — for example, if you find your sleep is regularly interrupted — it's time to evaluate your caffeine habit and adjust accordingly.

Here's how:

- **Tally** how much caffeine you're consuming each day. Check food labels. You may be getting more than you think.
- **Cut back** gradually to avoid withdrawal headaches and sluggishness. Try having one less caffeinated coffee, tea or soda each day.
- **Replace** coffee with tea, which contains about half the caffeine, or regular tea with herbal varieties, which contain no caffeine. Or try decaffeinated versions of coffee, tea or soda.
- **Steep** tea for a shorter amount of time for less caffeine by the cup.

The bottom line? Caffeine can be part of a healthy diet. Just remember to consume it in moderation.



Back in Action ... (continued)

Sleeping. Lie on your back with a pillow under your head and neck and a small pillow under your knees. *If you're a side sleeper:* Pull your knees up slightly toward your chest and slip a small pillow between your knees.

Driving. Move your seat so you don't have to lean forward to use the dashboard controls. On long rides, try placing a small pillow or rolled-up towel behind your lower back for extra support.

Get the picture? When it comes to working through back pain, think before you move, and easy does it when you do.

A PAIN IN THE THUMB For "BlackBerry Thumb," a painful disorder that has accompanied the popularity of hand-held communicators, the Cleveland Clinic advises the following: Don't use for more than three minutes continuously, and take plenty of breaks.



HOW TO SLOW DOWN

With the pace of life only getting faster, it's more important than ever to step on the brakes now and then. That's because constant busyness can keep your stress hormone levels high, leading to health problems down the road. **Try these tips to help you relax.**



Take 20. Make it a rule to take at least 20 minutes for you every day. Close your eyes, go for a walk, breathe deeply, soak your feet — give your body and mind this time to de-stress.

Cut back on time-wasters. Divide all your daily activities, from eating breakfast to watching TV, into three lists: "Must do," "Should do" and "Could do." Note how many could-dos fill up your time, and try limiting or bundling those activities. You'll reduce that frenzied feeling, guaranteed. **Note:** Taking time to relax is a *must-do*.

Leave space in your schedule. Don't jam-pack your days and evenings with obligations. Try leaving at least one evening a week open, and reserve some weekend "slowdown" time just for you. If your kids' schedules make this difficult, see about carpooling arrangements with friends.

Break the screen addiction. The Internet and e-mail are useful tools but can soak up a lot of your spare time. Try setting an alarm next to your screen to signal when you've gone past a certain amount of time, or program your computer to beep every 15 minutes.

Try at least one of these tips today. You *can* break the cycle of feeling overwhelmed.

NEXT MONTH: Exercise Myths Exposed

7 Ways ... (continued)

- 4 **Maintain a healthy weight.** People who are overweight or obese have a greater risk of developing high cholesterol.
- 5 **Limit the wrong stuff.** Cut back on fatty red meats, butter, cream, whole milk and cheeses. Go easy on packaged baked goods such as cookies, crackers and cakes. They're the most likely food to contain trans fats.
- 6 **Stay physically active.** Exercise can raise healthy HDL and lower unhealthy LDL levels.
- 7 **Don't smoke.** If you do smoke, talk to your health care provider about ways to quit.