

Think F.A.S.T. and Save a Life

If you suspect that someone is having a stroke, do this simple test:

Face: Ask the person to smile. Does one side droop?

Arms: Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

Speech: Ask the person to repeat a sentence. Are the words slurred or is the sentence repeated incorrectly?

Time: If someone shows any of these symptoms, time is of the essence. Call 9-1-1 or bring the person to a hospital immediately.

Other signs of stroke include headache, severe weakness and trouble walking or seeing.



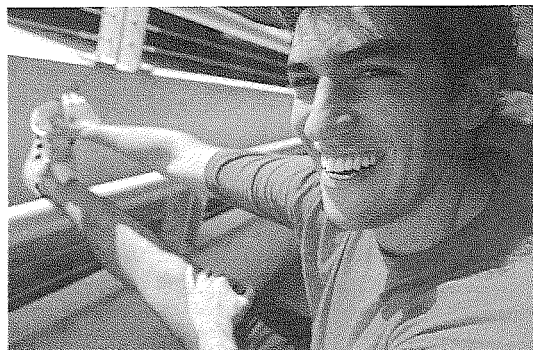
Injury-Free Running

Running for exercise has many advantages: It's great for strengthening your heart, lungs and leg muscles; it requires very little equipment; and it can be a fast, enjoyable way to improve fitness. However, running is a vigorous activity that is more likely to cause injuries than lower-impact activities such as swimming or using a stationary bicycle.

Before you begin a running routine, talk with your health care provider. To minimize the risk of injury, *keep these basics in mind:*

- 1 Start your training with a combination of walking and running. Increase your speed or distance by no more than 10 percent per week.
- 2 Rest or reduce your training intensity on days when you don't feel up to full-speed running.
- 3 Do some light stretching before and after running.
- 4 Run on the softest surface possible, such as grass or dirt trails — avoid concrete and gravel.
- 5 Be aware that hills increase the stress on your feet, knees and ankles.

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Manage Stress Naturally

These days it seems everyone is trying to "go green" with more environmentally friendly efforts. But did you know that greenery can also help you deal with stress?

Researchers have found that people can tolerate discomfort longer when there are plants present. Looking at natural scenes with flowers, greenery or water often reduces stress even in hospital patients, helping speed their recovery. Blood pressure and other stress indicators may improve within just a few minutes of having plants nearby.

Here are some ways to give stress relief a "green light":

- ✿ **Take up** gardening. Even an herb garden on your kitchen window sill can brighten a room.
- ✿ **Decorate** your home or work space with potted plants, cut flowers or nature photos.
- ✿ **Visit** local parks, botanical gardens or greenhouses.

- ✿ **Plant** greenery outside your windows at home or use hanging plants to improve the view.
- ✿ **Walk** outdoors regularly. Seek out routes with landscaping, natural greenery, ponds or streams.

The bottom line: Whether you visit the great outdoors or bring a little nature indoors, you may enjoy more peace and tranquility.



About Those Sugar Substitutes

Americans sure have a sweet tooth. The average person eats the equivalent of 20 teaspoons of sugar per day. Now with so much emphasis on weight management and diabetes, many people are turning to sugar substitutes.

So what are sugar substitutes and how are they used?

ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS Saccharin, aspartame, sucralose and acesulfame-K are much sweeter than sugar, don't raise blood sugar levels and don't promote tooth decay. All but aspartame can be used in cooking and baking. Safety concerns have been raised about some of these sweeteners, but the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) has approved them as safe to use for the average consumer — though people with phenylketonuria, also known as PKU, should avoid aspartame.

SUGAR ALCOHOLS Common sweeteners in this category include sorbitol, mannitol and xylitol. Like artificial sweeteners, these products don't promote tooth decay. They also cause a lower rise in blood sugar than most sugars. Since they contain about 50 percent fewer calories than sugars, they can be helpful in weight-control diets. However, some people may experience digestive problems when using these sweeteners.

STEVIA Stevia is made from the leaves of the stevia plant and has been used as a calorie-free sweetener for centuries. It is sold as a dietary supplement that some people view as a more natural sugar alternative. However, stevia has not been approved by the FDA for use as a sweetener.

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Help for Psoriasis

Are you bothered by persistent itchy or sore skin that looks red, irritated or even scaly? You might have psoriasis, a chronic skin condition. What can you do for relief?

■ **For starters, see your health care provider.** Since psoriasis can look like other skin conditions, it's important to get an accurate diagnosis. If it is psoriasis, there are a number of treatment options that can help you control flare-ups, ranging from topical salves to light therapy or oral medications. Be sure to review all medications you're already taking, as some can worsen psoriasis.



■ **Try self-care to calm your symptoms.** Use lotion to keep your skin moist, and avoid scratching or picking. An injury to the skin can cause a psoriasis patch to form, so treat any injuries promptly. Avoid cold, dry conditions whenever possible, and use a humidifier if needed.

■ **Make some lifestyle changes.** Emotional stress, smoking, alcohol consumption and infections (such as strep throat) can lead to flare-ups. Identify

your psoriasis triggers and take steps to eliminate them from your life as much as you can. And remember to follow good health practices such as eating a balanced diet and getting enough sleep.

"A person without a sense of humor is like a wagon without springs — jolted by every pebble in the road." — Henry Ward Beecher

Stay Cool When It Gets Hot

Summer can be a lot of fun, but excessive sun exposure can lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Whether you work or play in high heat, indoors or outdoors, extra care is needed during extreme conditions (temperatures 10 or more degrees above normal for your area) and humidity levels above 75 percent. **When the temperature rises:**

Stay cool. Seek out air-conditioned places, especially if you have heart disease. Malls and cinemas are good places to take a break from the heat. Fans provide some comfort, but may not prevent heat-related illness when temperatures hit the high 90s. Take a cool shower or bath.

Drink plenty of water. Hot weather means you need to drink more than usual. Target at least 16 ounces of cool fluids per hour, avoiding coffee, alcohol and sugary drinks. If you're limiting fluids for medical reasons, ask your health care provider how much liquid you should drink.

Pace yourself. Take frequent breaks in a cool area (or at least in the shade), especially if you feel weak or faint.

Use the buddy system. When working in the heat, you and your buddy should check on each other regularly.

Time it right. If possible, restrict exercise or other outdoor activities to mornings and evenings, when the temperature is cooler.

Dress light. Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose clothing and don a wide-brimmed hat.

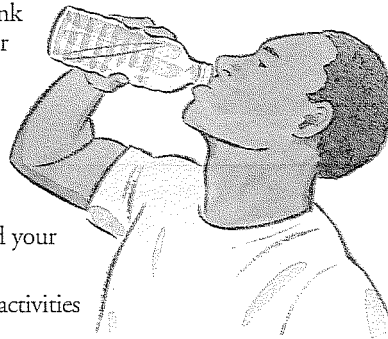
Know your needs. Be especially careful if you're overweight, have a cardiac condition or high blood pressure, or take medications for depression, insomnia or poor circulation. Children under 4 and adults over 65 may be at higher risk for overheating.

Replace nutrients. Heavy sweating and physical activity in the heat can reduce salt and other minerals in your body.

Check with your health care provider about ways to offset this loss, especially if you're on a salt restriction program.

Heat stroke can be deadly.

Know the signs: If you have a rapid pulse, headache, dizziness, nausea, red skin or high body temperature, get out of the heat and seek medical help immediately.



DR. ZORBA'S LONGEVITY CORNER

Did you know? Recent research shows that medication errors make up 10 to 20 percent of all medically caused negative events in hospitals.

To reduce the risk of errors:

- A. Bring a complete list of your medications when you go to the hospital — or bring the bottles.
- B. Review this list with your health care providers.
- C. Check daily to be sure that you're getting the correct medications. This is especially important after you've had surgery or are in the ICU, which is when medication errors often occur.
- D. Ask a friend or family member to assist you with these steps if needed.



Running ... (continued)

6 Determine which shoes are best for your needs. Buy well-cushioned running shoes, and replace them every 250 to 500 running miles or sooner.

7 Don't run in the dark; wear reflective material at dawn and dusk.

8 Drink one to two cups of fluid before running as well as every 20 to 30 minutes during your run.

9 Never run if you feel pain or discomfort.

With the proper precautions, you can enjoy running for many miles to come.

Sugar ... (continued)

The takeaway? Sugar substitutes can be a healthy choice *in moderation*. However, they aren't a magic bullet for weight loss; they should be part of a larger plan to live healthier by eating well, controlling portions and exercising.

NEXT MONTH: Drug-Free Approaches to Chronic Pain