

The WAITING ROOM COMPANION Created for Your Doctor's Office

WebMD[®]

webmd.com

the Magazine | March/April 2012 \$4.95

28 beauty

DO LIP PLUMPERS WORK?

30 fitness

HOW TO CUT THE FAT TALK

35 parenting

ARE ONLY CHILDREN HAPPY?

53 heart

WOMEN'S HEART ATTACK IQ

54 allergies

TREATMENT 101

55 mind

DOES YOUR KID HAVE ADHD?

56 diabetes

IS YOURS UNDER CONTROL?

57 sleep

DO YOU HAVE A DISORDER?

58 pain

THE ABCs OF BACKACHE CARE



Download
WebMD
the Magazine
for iPad!

CLEAN
SWEEP

IS YOUR HOME
46 HEALTHY?

FACE
TIME

SPRING SKIN'S
26 FRESH START

CLUB
QUEEN

Superstar and *Idol* judge
Jennifer Lopez's
40 new leading role

EXTRA
Spring Allergy
TIPS

4 Editor's Note

6 Healthy Start

Get ready to spring into action this season with four healthy tips.

8 WebMD Wire

Why nails on a chalkboard make you wince, how happiness helps you live longer, and why yawns are contagious.

14 Click Here

What's new and most viewed on **WebMD.com** right now.

15 Medical File

NFL star **Doug Flutie's** personal connection to helping autistic children. **PLUS:** *The Talk* co-host **Sharon Osbourne** helps colon cancer patients.

17 Health Highlights

Mark your calendar in honor of Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month.

18 Ask the Experts

What do you need to know about allergy shots?

20 My WebMD

Marfan syndrome didn't stop this WebMD community member from having the family she wanted.

21 WebMD 5: GI Know

Your top five questions about gastrointestinal disorders answered.



23 Exam Room

All about the aloe plant.

24 Worked for Me

WebMD community members trade tips on living with asthma.

26 Living Well

26 You Asked Get ready for spring skin with expert product picks.

28 Lip Service Can you get a plumper pout from a tube? We dissect the science.

29 Fear Factor How to face the dentist when you have dental phobia.

30 Health Matters

30 fitness

Lose It Cutting the fat talk from your daily diet is key to weight-loss success.

31 mind

Lone State Why being left out hurts, for kids on the playground and adults.

32 sleep

Lost in the Night The skinny on the sleep-weight loss connection.

33 pets

Proof Positive Expert tips for puppy- and kitten-proofing your house.

34 patient

Bargain Rights Can you negotiate with your doctor about the bill?

35 parenting

Singular Sensation Let the guilt go, parents of only kids.

36 Healthy Eats

36 Anatomy of a Radish Why this veggie should top your grocery list.

37 Taking the Fifth Chef Domenica's key advice: Eat five small meals a day. **PLUS:** Try her Tuscan chicken soup.

Correction: We incorrectly identified Elisabeth Kunkel, MD, in last issue's cover story "Moore to Do."

39 How I Got My Kid to Like Walnuts

One reader's tale of cracking this nut.

take the test you can take to your doctor

ASSESSMENTS, QUIZZES, AND REFERENCE INFORMATION ON EVERY PAGE

50 sex
Is your sex life on pause?

51 diet
Is your child overweight?

52 cancer
Your ovarian cancer risk?

53 heart
Women's heart attack smarts

54 allergies
Allergy treatments 101

55 mind
Does your kid have ADHD?

56 diabetes
Is your diabetes in control?

57 sleep
Do you have sleep problems?

58 pain
The ABCs of back care

59 WebMD Checkup

Singer **Avril Lavigne's** inspiring work with Race to Erase MS and her best and worst health habits.



NEW!

The app that keeps everything in one place.
Except for dinner.

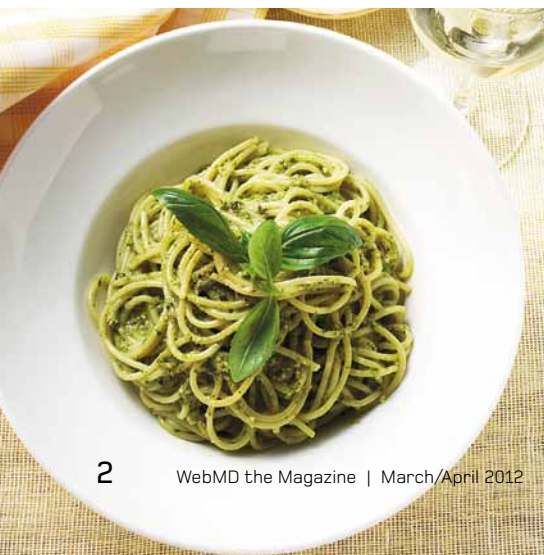
Baby WebMD

- Access hundreds of articles and videos developed and approved by WebMD doctors.
- Manage schedules for sleeping, feeding, diaper changes, and growth.
- Create a digital baby book and share photos and videos, plus tag them with milestones.



It does more than keep your family informed.
It keeps you informed.
To keep your baby healthy.

Go to webmd.com/babyapp for your **free download.**



You might have heard we hosted an event with first lady Michelle Obama a few weeks ago. To celebrate the second anniversary of her national Let's Move! campaign—the initiative that, among other things, aims to get families (especially kids) off the couch and eating healthy—WebMD hosted a town hall event called **Simple Tips for Healthy Families**.

The panel, which consisted of the first lady and a few of our nutrition and kids' health experts, talked with an audience of folks just like you about ways to get kids to eat their veggies and exercise.

The event was relaxed, down-home, and chatty, even though, as national conversations go, this one is pretty sobering. The stakes are high and the implications serious when you consider how inactive, overweight, and sleep deprived we've become. News about our general ill health is almost daily now—for example, a new study shows about half of elementary school children still have access to sugary snacks and other unhealthy food choices in school vending machines, despite more sensible nutrition standards in recent years.

We share the same goal for ourselves and our children—a healthy, happy, long life—but we run into heaps of challenges getting there. Mrs. Obama clearly gets this. She focuses on small, simple, common-sense solutions. In fact, she served up so many from her own life that you almost forgot she lives in the White House!

Some of her ideas are probably already in your playbook or at least on your to-do list ("We don't have dessert every day," she said. "We eat together as a family...We do activities we like, and we mix it up."). She also assured parents that they absolutely have a right to speak up about the food served at their kids' schools, that the best way to compete with a video game console

is to "turn it off, say no," and that sometimes the only way through mealtime disagreements is with tough love: "You've got to eat your vegetables, period."

Find the complete **WebMD Town Hall** video at **WebMD.com**.

Michelle Obama isn't the only one with kids' health on her mind. **Jennifer Lopez**, our stunning cover star this issue, is proud of her new role with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, the same organization that taught her all about health and well-being when she was a teen growing up in the South Bronx.

Now, Lopez wants to teach a whole new generation of kids how to take care of themselves, and the earlier the better. "No matter how busy or how demanding your life is," she says, "you need to ensure you are both physically and mentally fit."

Sounds to me like another tip for healthy families.

Happy spring to you,

Colleen Parett

Colleen Parett
Executive Editor, WebMD the Magazine



EXECUTIVE EDITOR • Colleen Parett

DEPUTY EDITOR • Kim Caviness

SENIOR EDITORS • Susan Davis, Andrea Gabrick

ASSISTANT EDITOR • Chloe Thompson

CHIEF MEDICAL EDITOR • Michael W. Smith, MD,
Board Certified, Internal Medicine

LEAD MEDICAL EDITOR • Brunilda Nazario, MD, Board Certified,
Internal Medicine, Endocrinology and Metabolism

SENIOR MEDICAL EDITOR • Louise Chang, MD,
Board Certified, Internal Medicine

MEDICAL EDITORS • Hansa Bhargava, MD, Board Certified, Pediatrics;
Laura J. Martin, MD, Board Certified, Internal Medicine

WEBMD.COM EXECUTIVE EDITOR • Sean Swint

BOOKINGS DIRECTOR • Wendy Zipes Hunter
wendy@celebrity-concepts.com • 954-344-0912

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS • Christina Boufis, Daniel J. DeNoon,
Jennifer Dixon, Heather Hatfield, Katherine Kam, Lauren Paige
Kennedy, Susan Kuchinskas, Matt McMillen, Erin O'Donnell,
Monica Kass Rogers, Gina Shaw, Stephanie Watson

COMMUNITY EDITORS • Leona Perry, Kathy Williams

ART DIRECTORS • Glenn Pierce, Melissa H. Miller

WEBMD.COM ART DIRECTOR • John P. Kay

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR • Connie Otto

PHOTO EDITOR • Ali Heck Southworth

ADVERTISING TRAFFIC MANAGER • Jennifer Morgan

PRODUCTION ARTIST • Brenda M. Waugh

COPY EDITOR • Sharon Congdon

MANAGEMENT OF EDITORIAL, DESIGN, AND PRODUCTION

tmg custom media 1129 20th Street, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036 • 202-331-7700

WebMD the Magazine is distributed to doctors' offices throughout the United States. Patient names may have been changed to protect privacy. The information herein is meant to complement and not replace advice provided by a licensed health care professional. WebMD the Magazine is not responsible for advertising claims. WebMD the Magazine (ISSN 1553-9946), Vol. 8, No. 2, is published by WebMD, 111 Eighth Ave., Suite 700, New York, NY 10011. Send returns to: WebMD. To change your subscription (address, number of copies received or to stop delivery), contact WebMD, Magazine Subscriptions, 111 Eighth Ave., Suite 700, New York, NY 10011; or send to magazine_subscriptions@webmd.net. Printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Convention. This magazine may not be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission of WebMD. ©2012 WebMD, LLC. All rights reserved. WebMD's mission is to provide objective, trustworthy, and timely health information. Our website and magazine provide credible content, tools, and in-depth reference material on a wide variety of health topics, all of which are reviewed by our board-certified physicians. Any opinions expressed are of the experts and are not the opinions of WebMD. WebMD does not endorse any specific product, service, or treatment. The content of each WebMD the Magazine "Spotlight," while funded by an advertiser, is selected by and solely under the editorial control of the WebMD editorial staff. The content in WebMD the Magazine is intended for informational use only; it is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in WebMD the Magazine.



VICE PRESIDENT, PUBLISHER • Heidi Anderson
handerson@webmd.net

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER • Dawn Carey
dcarey@webmd.net • 212-624-3901

GROUP VP, SALES OPERATIONS • Jonathan Katz

BUSINESS MANAGER • John Krzeminski

ADVERTISING SALES

NEW YORK

Patria Rodriguez • prodriguez@webmd.net • 212-417-9542

Alisa Feiner • afeiner@webmd.net • 212-624-3897

Pete Holfelder • pholfelder@webmd.net • 646-674-6825

Patti Mrozowski • pmrozowski@webmd.net • 212-624-3750

CHICAGO

Carol Matthias • cmatthias@webmd.net • 312-416-9277

Meghan Rice • mrice@webmd.net • 312-416-9276

WEST COAST

Elise Perlmutter • eperlmutt@webmd.net • 424-248-0616

MARKETING

VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING • Fred Latasa

BUSINESS & MARKETING SENIOR DIRECTOR • Jonathan Deaner

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR • James Miller

INTEGRATED MARKETING DIRECTOR • Tara Wacks

INTEGRATED MARKETING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR • Mrinalini Nair

SALES OPERATIONS ANALYST • Kisha Jackson

MARKETING DIRECTOR • Rebecca Loveridge

MARKETING COORDINATOR • Kara Batt

Customer Service and Subscription Information

PROFESSIONALS • To manage your subscription, go to
WebMD.com/magazine/subscribe.

READERS • Comments? Questions? Go to CustomerCare.WebMD.com
or "Contact Us" at the bottom of every page on WebMD.com

WebMD®

111 Eighth Ave., Suite 700, New York, N.Y. 10011

INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER • Anthony Vuolo

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER • William E. Pence

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CONSUMER SERVICES • Greg Mason

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,
GENERAL COUNSEL, AND SECRETARY • Doug Wamsley

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, LEGAL • Michael Glick

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, SALES & SALES OPERATIONS • Dorothy E. Kelly Gemmell

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER • Clare Martorana

SENIOR DIRECTOR, PUBLIC RELATIONS • Katherine Hahn

SPRING AHEAD

4 ways to get ready



give back

EARTH ANGEL

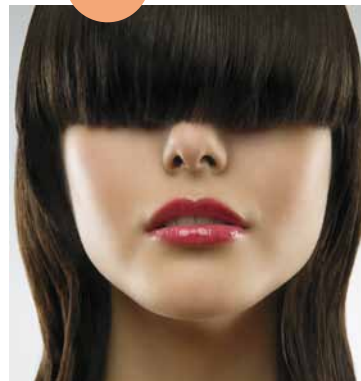
Looking for new ways to go green in your community this Earth Day, April 22? Check out the long list of environmentally friendly events around the country on the Environmental Protection Agency's website. Enter your ZIP code to find the closest festivals, group cleanups, volunteer events, and more near you. Go to epa.gov/earthday/events.htm.

The opinions expressed in this section are of the experts and are not the opinions of WebMD. WebMD does not endorse any specific product, service, or treatment.

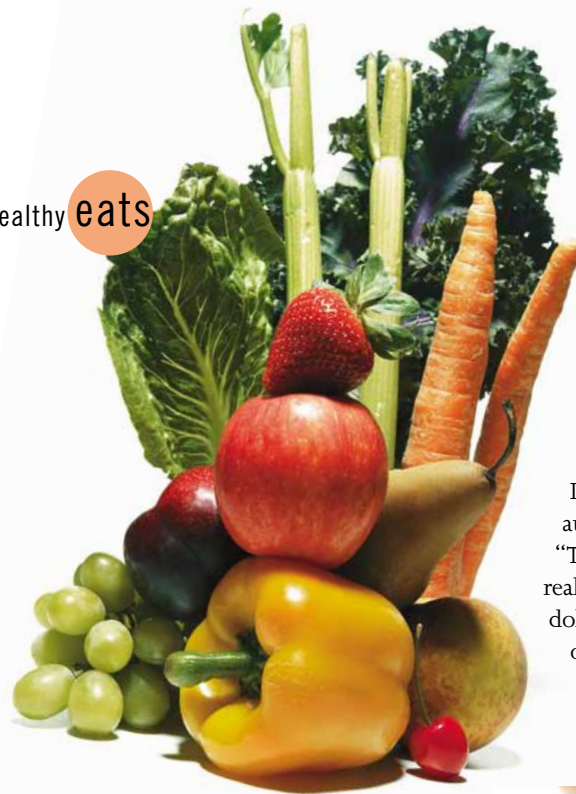
LOCKS STEP

Ready for weekly deep conditioning treatments? "The winter-to-spring transition is the perfect time to treat your hair to more moisturizing and conditioning hair care products," says Ron Robinson, founder and CEO of BeautyStat.com and WebMD hair care expert. "Deep conditioning is a must for curly hair," Robinson says, as well as for straightened, colored, or relaxed hair. After shampooing, apply a conditioner like Redken Extreme Conditioner (\$13) or any formula from j.f. lazartique starting at mid-shaft, working down to the end (skip the roots), and cover with a shower cap; leave on for up to 30 minutes before rinsing.

hair care



healthy eats

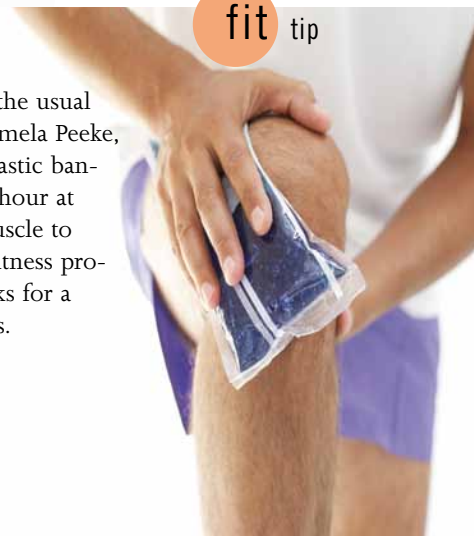


FARM FRESH

The return of spring means the return of farmers markets in many parts of the country. Frequent visits to a farmers market are good for your dinner table and your health. "Outside of having your own garden, farmers markets will have the freshest produce you can get," says Domenica Catelli, chef, cookbook author, and Mom-a-licious founder. "The flavors and nutrient content are really at their peak." To stretch your dollars when you go, invest in fruits or veggies that you can cook or freeze that day, Catelli says.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: ANDREAS KUEHNGETTY IMAGES; JAMES WOBRELL/STOCKFOD; MASTERFILE; JULIE GETTY IMAGES

fit tip



PRICE IS RIGHT

If your exercise routine seems to leave you with more than the usual aches and pains, think PRICE, says WebMD fitness expert Pamela Peeke, MD. To ease strained muscles: Protect the muscle with an elastic bandage or splint, Ice the affected area for no more than a half hour at a time, Compress with an Ace bandage, and Elevate the muscle to reduce swelling and pain. And remember: Ease back into a fitness program with small steps. "It takes no less than four to six weeks for a body muscle to adapt to a new training regimen," Peeke says.



Fit is fun!



Jump-start your kids into a **fit** lifestyle this year!

Get started at fit.webmd.com today. **Fit** is designed to teach healthy habits in a fun way with kid-friendly recipes, videos, and games. It's customized for each member of the family: small children, big kids, teenagers, even a section just for parents.



Kids are complicated. Getting your family healthy doesn't have to be.

For more information on Fit, go to WebMD.com.

Fit WebMD SEARCH

or visit us at <http://fit.webmd.com>

FACEBOOK BRAIN

A team of British scientists has found a link between the number of friends people have on Facebook and the amount of gray matter in certain parts of their brains. One of those brain areas also tends to be bigger in people with lots of real-world friends.

Researchers at University College London did magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) on the brains of 125 college students. Then they recorded the number of friends each student had. On average, each had about 300 Facebook friends. The more friends a Facebook user had, the more gray matter in several regions of the brain—including the amygdala, which is associated with processing memory and emotional responses. People with more real-world friends also have more gray matter in this region of the brain.

The size of three other brain regions correlated with the size of people's online social networks, but not with real-world networks. What's not yet clear is which came first, the gray matter or the friends—are people with more gray matter more social, or did their brains change because of social media? The researchers also discovered that the more Facebook friends people have, the more real-life friends they tend to have, concluding that users most often look to the site to maintain and reinforce existing relationships, not create new ones.

Source: *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*



Go Fish



Lots of studies have linked eating oily fish (such as halibut and salmon) to a reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease, an incurable, progressive brain disease that destroys memory. A new study shows why fish might be helpful.

University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine researchers took images of the brains of 260 people, whose average age was 71. The volunteers also filled out questionnaires about how much fish they ate each week. About seven years later, the researchers took a second set of images, and found that older people who ate baked or broiled fish at least once a week were less likely than others to have brain cells die off in the brain area responsible for short-term memory. Those same people were also less likely to develop mild mental impairment or Alzheimer's disease.

The researchers took into account other risk factors, including age, gender, education, and physical activity. And they say that still other factors—including eating less meat—also could have contributed to the link between fish and brain health. The results, presented at a medical conference, have not appeared in a peer-reviewed journal.

Source: Radiological Society of North America 2011 meeting

Forget Your Age

Hold on to your hat (if you can remember where it is): Contrary to popular belief, age-related memory loss may begin long before the senior years.

Based on tests given to 7,400 British civil service workers over 10 years, researchers say "modest" declines in memory, reasoning, and language use can begin as early as age 45.

The declines were more pronounced in the mid- to late 60s (9.6%) than in the mid- to late 40s (3.6%). But the findings could suggest that efforts to prevent dementia may need to start as young as age 45. Other studies show that taking steps to lower heart attack and stroke risk may also protect against age-related memory loss.

Source: *BMJ*



Sitting Pretty?

Researchers have known for a long time that regular exercise reduces the risk of certain cancers. But a new review of more than 200 studies finds that exercising isn't enough—you also have to avoid prolonged periods of sitting. In fact, doing so could prevent nearly 100,000 cases of breast and colon cancer in the United States each year.

The breaks don't have to be long or elaborate. The American Institute for Cancer Research advises adults to take one- or two-minute "activity" breaks every hour. Other researchers suggest setting a timer to remind you to take breaks and walking around the room when you're on the phone.

In the current review, the researchers found still more evidence that increased physical activity helps prevent cancer. People who exercised the most were 30% to 35% less likely to develop colon cancer than those who exercised the least, and were 20% to 30% less likely to get breast cancer. According to research published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* in 2010, prolonged sitting also increases the risk of dying from heart disease.

Source: *European Heart Journal*

In Living Color

Color blocking might be the latest fashion trend, but it can also translate to your kids' plates. If you're looking for a way to get kids to eat more kinds of foods, color might be the key, a new study suggests.

Researchers showed 23 preteen children and 46 adults photos of different combinations of food on plates and asked them to choose which they liked the most. The preteens preferred plates with seven different items and six different colors, while adults favored plates with only three items and three colors. Design scored big points, too: Kids liked foods laid out in fun shapes, such as hearts made of peas or a smile made of bacon strips.

What the study didn't show is whether kids would actually eat the foods they found more appealing. That's an experiment parents can try at home.

Source: *Acta Paediatrica*



PIN HEAD



Pins and needles? The thought of them might seem to induce pain rather than relieve it, but a new study shows that acupuncture may provide lasting benefits to people who have migraines. That said, its short-term benefits may be no greater than when someone just sticks needles in random areas of your skin.

In the study, nearly 500 adults received either traditional Chinese acupuncture or a sham treatment for three months. In the sham group, researchers inserted acupuncture needles into random points in the skin. After four weeks, people in both the acupuncture and sham treatment groups reported about half as many days with migraines as before the study. In the month after the study, the acupuncture and sham groups still reported having fewer migraines, as well as having less severe migraines. After three months, however, only the people who received real acupuncture continued to report a reduction in migraine frequency and intensity.

This study comes on the heels of others that show acupuncture is more effective than no acupuncture for treating migraines over a long period of time and that acupuncture can work as well as commonly prescribed high blood pressure medications called "beta blockers" for preventing these debilitating headaches.

Source: *Canadian Medical Association Journal*

WebMD® for iPhone, iPad & Android

Trusted Health Information.

Whenever. Wherever.

Check your symptoms, access drug & treatment information, get first aid essentials, and check local health listings on the go, from the most trusted brand in health information.



WebMD Symptom Checker

Select the part of the body that is troubling you, choose your symptoms, and learn about potential conditions or issues.



Conditions

Find medically reviewed information about Conditions relevant to you and learn more about causes, treatments, and related symptoms.



First Aid Essentials

Your handy guide for medical emergencies. From insect stings to broken bones, helpful treatment tips are always available, even without an Internet connection.



Drugs & Treatments

Search our extensive database for information on Drugs, Supplements, and Vitamins. Access content such as Uses, Side Effects, Warnings, and more.



Local Health Listings

Find the closest physician, hospital, & pharmacy based on your current city, state or zip.



Pill Identification Tool

Identify your prescription drugs and over the counter medicines by pill shape, color, & imprint.

WebMD® wire

BackOm



If you have low back pain, the idea of doing yoga poses such as cobra or downward dog might make you cringe. But yoga can be an effective treatment.

In the largest study ever done on yoga and backache, which looked at 228 people with lower back pain, about one-third of the group did 12 weeks of weekly yoga classes. Another third did intensive stretching. The last third read a self-help book about managing back pain.

Those in the yoga and stretching groups reported less pain and less need for medication than those who read the self-help book. The results lasted for at least six months. The researchers speculate that the stretching and strengthening benefits of yoga help ease back pain.

Source: Archives of Internal Medicine

WORK IT

In the ongoing debate about working moms, the welfare of mom herself often gets overlooked. In fact, most research on the topic focuses on how children fare when mothers work. But new research shows that working part-time, especially when children are young, may benefit a mother's well-being, with moms who held jobs reporting better health and less depression.

A researcher at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro interviewed 1,300 mothers across the country seven times over a 10-year period. They included moms who didn't work, those who worked part-time (between one and 32 hours a week), and those who worked full-time.

Mothers who work part-time gain as many emotional and physical benefits as full-time working mothers, the researcher says. They also tend to have fewer work/family conflicts, to be more involved in their children's education both at school and at home, and to be more sensitive to their children's needs.

Source: Journal of Family Psychology



Family Fitness

Think there's no point in exercising because obesity runs in your family? Not so fast. New research from Cambridge, England, shows exercise can reduce the effects of the "obesity gene" in adults.

About three-quarters of Europeans and North Americans carry the "fat mass and obesity associated" (FTO) gene that is linked to weight gain and possible obesity. But the study, looking at data from 218,000 people with the gene, found those who exercised regularly were about 30% less likely to be obese than those who didn't work out.

In other words, genes are not destiny.

Source: PLoS Medicine

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: GRAHAM MITCHELL/GETTY IMAGES; PETER CADOGGETTY IMAGES; BLEND IMAGES/GLOW IMAGES



Live Happy

Happiness certainly makes life more pleasant. New research shows it may also help people live longer.

The research, part of England's longest-running study on aging, followed more than 3,800 people ages 52 to 79 for five years. The researchers asked them to rate their feelings of happiness and anxiety at different points throughout the day. Then they linked the scores with participants' longevity. Negative emotions like anxiety did not affect lifespan. But those who had the highest happiness scores had a 35% lower risk of dying during the study than those who had the lowest scores, even when the results were adjusted for age, sex, wealth, education, health, and lifestyle. Researchers say the results highlight the importance of emotional well-being in older people.

Source: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*

7.5
Percentage
of men
reporting
binge eating
in a one-
month period

Source: *International Journal of Eating Disorders*



Dangerous Moves

Walking while listening to an iPod or other MP3 player can be dangerous, a new study shows.

After analyzing records of pedestrian injuries and deaths between 2004 and 2011, researchers at the University of Maryland School of Medicine say 116 pedestrians had been hit by a car or train while wearing headphones. Eighty-one died. And the yearly death rate tripled from 16 in 2004–05 to 47 in 2010–11. Nearly 90% of the accidents took place in urban areas; more than two-thirds of those injured or killed were men under age 30.

Researchers suggest that wearing headphones endangers pedestrians two ways: by distracting them because they're listening to and operating the device rather than paying attention to their surroundings and by preventing them from hearing the honking horns of approaching cars or trains.

Source: *Injury Prevention*



possibly because they may not suspect early on that cancer is causing their symptoms. African-Americans and those lacking health insurance are also at greater risk for late-stage cancer.

The take-home message? Talk to your doctor if you're younger than 50 and have a family history of colon or rectal cancers, or notice symptoms of either, such as bleeding, abdominal pain, and changes in bowel habits.

Source: *Archives of Internal Medicine*

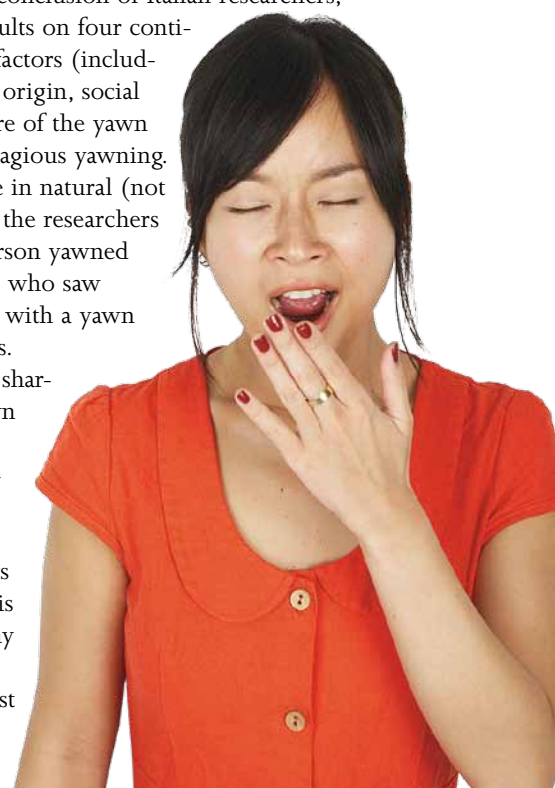
Open Bonds

Ever notice how yawns pass from one person to another? It might be a sign of emotional bonding—yawns tend to spread between family and friends, not strangers. That's the conclusion of Italian researchers, who studied 109 adults on four continents to investigate factors (including gender, national origin, social bonds, and the nature of the yawn itself) linked to contagious yawning.

Observing people in natural (not laboratory) settings, the researchers recorded when a person yawned and whether anyone who saw the yawn responded with a yawn within three minutes.

The likelihood of sharing a contagious yawn was greatest among family members, followed by friends, and then acquaintances—which shows contagious yawning is a function of empathy and emotional closeness. People were least likely to yawn after a stranger did.

Source: *PLoS One*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: RICK GAY/GETTY IMAGES; FUSE/GETTY IMAGES; BALLYSCANLON/GETTY IMAGES



SOUND BOARD

You know how the sound of someone running fingernails across a chalkboard makes you shudder? (Or how even reading about it causes you to wince?) A new study shows that one reason this sound drives people nuts has to do with the shape of the human ear.

Researchers at the University of Cologne in Germany found that fingernails scratching on a chalkboard produce a sound at the peak of human hearing—between 2,000 and 4,000 hertz. To make matters worse, the anatomy of the ear canal amplifies sounds at these frequencies, making them seem even louder.

Listeners' preconceived notions about the sound also amplified its irritating quality. When the researchers told people the sound of fingernails on chalkboard was contemporary music, they rated it as more pleasant than when they were told the truth. Hearing the truth about the sound's source also led to more physical signs of stress—increased sweating and higher blood pressure and heart rate.

The results were presented at a conference and have not yet been published in a peer-reviewed medical journal.

Source: *Acoustical Society of America 2011 meeting*

ON THE RISE

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, and here's something you need to be especially aware of: A new study shows that while colon and rectal cancer rates have dropped in adults older than 50, rates in younger adults have climbed.

Researchers at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston examined nearly 600,000 rectal and colon cancer cases reported between 1998 and 2007 to a national registry. About 89% of these cases involved patients who were 50 or older, but the total number of cases dropped in that age group—possibly because increased screenings allowed doctors to detect and remove precancerous polyps. But in adults younger than 50, rectal cancer cases increased nearly 4% each year and colon cancer rates rose nearly 3% per year during that period.

Another finding: Younger adults are more likely than older ones to be diagnosed with harder-to-treat late-stage cancers,



HIGH WATER MARKS

For the first time in the history of tracking drownings in the United States, the number of children hospitalized for drowning has dropped.

After looking at inpatient and discharge records, researchers from Johns Hopkins University and the Arkansas Children's Hospital say the number of children hospitalized for drowning fell 49% from 1993 to 2008. The number of hospitalized children who died from drowning declined more than 40% in that time.

Public health experts say better prevention efforts, including increased supervision by parents and lifeguards, more pool fencing, more swimming lessons for toddlers, and infant tub seats have contributed to the decrease in drowning-related deaths and hospitalizations.

Drowning is the second-leading cause of death from unintentional injury in American children up to age 19. (Car accidents are the leading cause.) Drowning-related injuries are four to six times more common in boys than girls.

Source: *Pediatrics*

In a Crunch

Say hello to fab abs and bye-bye to batwings with our new, original six-part video series, **Taming Your Trouble Spots.**

WebMD fitness expert Pamela Peeke, MD, shows how you can tone abs, arms, legs, and butt in just a few minutes a day.



trouble spots video [WebMD SEARCH](#)

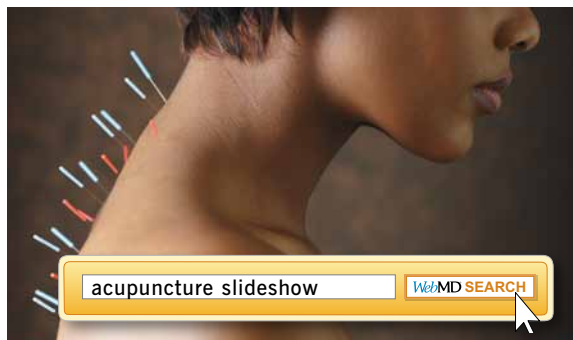
Maybe, Baby?

Trying to get pregnant? Increase your odds and get everything you need to know at the **WebMD Health and Pregnancy Center.**



Stick Up

What's got everyone talking about acupuncture? Is it right for you? Get the lowdown on what it is and how it works in the WebMD slideshow, **A Visual Guide to Acupuncture.**



acupuncture slideshow [WebMD SEARCH](#)

Download *WebMD the Magazine* for iPad!



It's free and available in the App Store today. Bonus extras include a Jennifer Lopez video and the latest interactive tools from WebMD!

TOP SEARCHES

Here's what's hot on WebMD.com right now!

1. 10 flat-belly tips
2. Adult flu symptoms
3. Ovulation calendar
4. Help for dyslexia
5. Why am I so bloated?
6. Recognizing depression symptoms
7. **Foods for healthy hair**
8. What is lupus?
9. 5 tips for better sleep
10. Ask the vet: Is my cat overweight?

*as of 2/1/2012

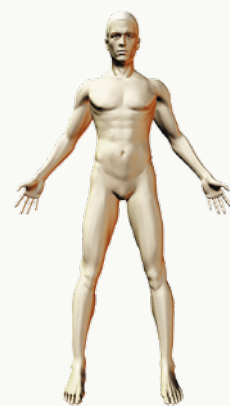


Endometriosis

TOP SYMPTOMS INCLUDE

- Cramping and pain during periods
- Chronic pain in the lower stomach and back
- Trouble conceiving or infertility

Endometriosis happens when cells from the uterus's lining (called the endometrium) grow outside the uterus, such as on the ovaries, intestine, rectum, and bladder. Doctors aren't sure what causes endometriosis but they do know it can lead to the above symptoms, plus painful intercourse and bowel movements. Women with family members who have endometriosis are more likely to develop it. Other risk factors include starting your period at an early age, not giving birth, frequent (more often than the normal 28-day cycle) or unusually long periods, and a closed hymen (which blocks the flow of menstrual blood). Pain medications (such as NSAIDs), warm baths, and heating pads can help control pain and cramps. A doctor also may prescribe hormone therapy (such as birth control pills) to reduce endometriosis tissue growth, and surgery to remove it.



Key in your symptoms

[FIND THE ANSWER](#)

symptomchecker

Cancer Care

Survivor Sharon Osbourne helps others battling the disease

When you're the Queen Mum of heavy metal's royal family, everything's a bit different—even cancer. "I had a whole team of people to take me to and from chemotherapy, to cook for me, to do everything for me," recalls Sharon Osbourne, wife of metal madman Ozzy Osbourne, of her bout with colon cancer in 2002.

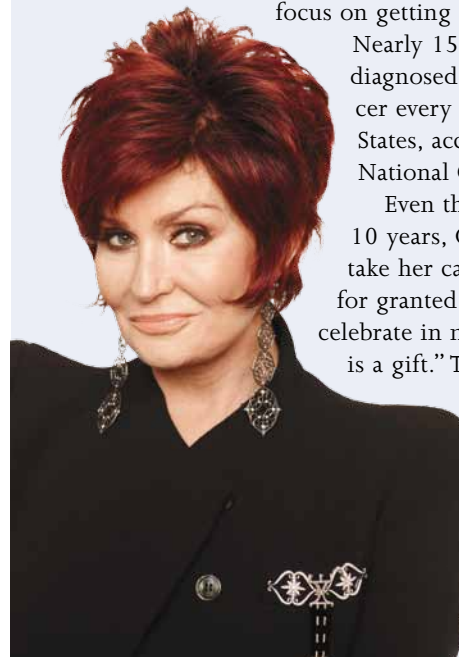
Osbourne, 59, now a host of *The Talk* on CBS and a judge on NBC's *America's Got Talent*, will celebrate 10 years of being cancer-free this year, but she still remembers the rigors. "The stuff you hate is always the vain stuff: losing your hair, your nails. And the hair that's left is just dead stuff," she recalls.

But Osbourne knew that many of the men and women in treatment with her at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles had it worse. "You sit next to people and you're all on the same journey, and it doesn't matter who you are. Then you leave—and you see this lady waiting at the bus stop after her chemo and you just feel so guilty," Osbourne recalls.

That woman and others like her inspired Osbourne to create the Sharon Osbourne Colon Cancer Program at Cedars-Sinai in 2004. The program supports cancer patients with at-home help, transportation, child care, and other assistance. "We have people who will pick you up, take you to treatment, take you home, watch your kids, cook for you," Osbourne explains. "If they're taken care of, you can focus on getting well."

Nearly 150,000 people are diagnosed with colorectal cancer every year in the United States, according to the National Cancer Institute.

Even though it's been 10 years, Osbourne doesn't take her cancer-free status for granted. "Every day I celebrate in my head. Every day is a gift." To learn more about her Cedars-Sinai program, go to [sharonosbourne.com](#) and click on "Support My Cancer Program." —Gina Shaw



TOP: DEREK WILMONT; BOTTOM: JAMES WHITE/CBS



Doug Flutie's foundation delivers support to families nationwide.

Team Work

The Flutie family tackles autism

Doug Flutie Sr., 49, reaches his goals on the field and off. "For whatever reason, people have the feeling I can get things done," the Heisman Trophy winner says. Maybe they remember the former quarterback's famous heart-stopping, last-second Hail Mary pass in 1984 to win the Orange Bowl for Boston College.

But for families with children who have autism, Flutie's can-do mojo scores highest with the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism ([www.dougflutiejrfoundation.org](#)). Flutie and his wife, Laurie, established it in 2000 to honor son Doug Jr., known as Dougie, who has childhood disintegrative disorder (CDD), a very rare autism spectrum disorder.

A Canadian study suggests one to six children in 100,000 may have CDD. Like Dougie, they develop normally for at least two years but then lose some or most language, motor, and social skills. Genetics or the body's autoimmune system could play a role, but scientists aren't sure. Dougie, now 20 and 6 feet tall, is termed "low functioning"—he learns at a very slow pace, says Flutie, but does go to school.

To date, the Fluties have raised more than \$13 million to support families affected by autism spectrum disorders, which are among the fastest-growing developmental disabilities in children and adults in the United States. The foundation funds national advocacy, educational, therapeutic, and recreational programs. For National Autism Awareness Month, the foundation's members and other organizations involved with Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts will visit Boston on April 9, the state's Autism Awareness Day, to remind legislators about the importance of critical services and support for families who need them.

Throughout the year, the foundation hosts numerous fundraisers, some of which Dougie attends. "People really connect with him," says his proud dad. "We give comfort to families so they feel like they're not alone." —Stephanie Stephens

In a few clicks you can help
keep your family protected.

Introducing the
WebMD® Vaccine Tracker



An easy-to-use tool that can help you:

- track vaccinations for your entire family
- prepare for school and sports admissions forms
- stay up-to-date with email reminders

So you can spend your time recording the other important stuff, like her first smile.

Only at **WebMD.com**

Start Now

health highlights ▶ MARK YOUR CALENDAR



March

A month of tips to boost your multiple sclerosis management smarts

Sunday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
TO YOUR HEALTH Read up on the latest treatment news and expert tips for living with MS. Check out the MS Health Center at WebMD.com .		 2 GROUP ON Connect with others through advocacy groups like the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (nationalmssociety.org) and the Multiple Sclerosis Foundation (msfocus.org).			
4	5 STAY ACTIVE Exercise keeps you fit, lifts your mood, and reduces stress. But don't overdo it. 	7	8	9 HIGH LOW Boost your immune system with a low-fat, high-fiber diet. That means lots of fruits, whole grains, and veggies. 	10
11 DON'T FORGET If you have memory troubles, make lists, keep a calendar, write things down. 	12	13 SEX RX Concerned about problems in the bedroom? Talk to your doctor. MS does not mean no sex. 	March 10–18 is MS Awareness Week. Get involved! Help make a difference.		17 JUST BREATHE To calm your mind, get fresh air, turn off your cell phone, or try meditating. 
25	26 i DO TALK Download the i-Inject iPhone, iPad, and iPod app to help you manage meds and track injections. 	28			31 GO EASY Don't let fatigue defeat you. Learn to pace yourself to get things done.

Get support. Visit the **MS communities**.



WebMD.com

Sure Shot? Get the lowdown on allergy relief

Q ▶ I'm tired of fighting my allergy symptoms. What do allergy shots do? How long would I have to get them?

A ▶ Allergy shots, also called immunotherapy, are best for people with severe allergy symptoms or those that last more than three months every year. They can also help people who can't take allergy medicines because of side effects or interactions with other medications. The shots work by slowly increasing the dose of the substances (or allergens, such as pollen and pet dander) that trigger your symptoms, ultimately lowering your sensitivity to them.

In the buildup phase, you'll get the shots once or twice a week for several months. Some people start to feel relief within the first few weeks, while others have to wait several months. When you reach your maintenance dose, you'll get a shot every two to four weeks for two to five years.

While the shots don't "cure" allergies, they should reduce your symptoms noticeably. Most people eventually discontinue them completely (although if you move to a different area, you might need a new round of shots to protect you against specific pollens there).

In most cases, allergy shots don't cause side effects, other than redness and slight swelling near the injection site. Each injection

does pose a slight risk of allergic reaction, however, so you always need to get your shot at a doctor's office and stay onsite for a few minutes afterward.

Can local honey help my allergies?

No. The theory that taking in small amounts of pollen by eating local honey to build up immunity is FALSE.

Here's why: It's generally the pollen blowing in the wind (released by nonflowering trees, weeds, and grasses) that triggers springtime allergies, not the pollen in flowers carried by bees. So even local honey won't have much, if any, of the type of pollen setting off your allergies.

Studies show bees don't just bring flower pollen back to their honeycomb. They bring "tree and grass pollen, in addition to mold spores, diesel particles, and other contaminants," says Michael Palumbo, MD, an allergist with Allergy & Clinical Immunology Associates in Pittsburgh. The problem is that it's difficult to make a honey from just *one* kind of pollen (say, weeds and not grass). So, save your local honey for your tea and toast, not for your allergy medicine cabinet.

true or false?



Q ▶ Every spring my child's allergies drive her crazy. We know it's a drastic step, but should we consider moving?

A ▶ Lots of people are tempted to move from one U.S. region to another to find some relief from their allergies. Many think desert climes are the solution, reasoning that areas with less vegetation won't trigger symptoms. But those with allergies have a genetic predisposition for being allergic to some plants, which puts them at higher risk for reacting to other plants as well.

True, relocating from a humid to an arid area may help alleviate allergies to house dust mites somewhat (they thrive when humidity is greater than 50%). For outdoor allergies, however, there is little rest for the weary. Even in bone-dry regions, grasses, olive and mesquite trees, and weeds (including ragweed) grow abundantly and release their pollen into the wind. Allergenic molds (mostly in soil) also grow well. Adding insult to injury, dry hot desert air can irritate already inflamed nasal and throat tissues.

If you still want to explore a move for your daughter, consult a board-certified allergist. Find out which allergens are prevalent in which region, and check the average pollen count to be sure it's truly lower than the count where you live now.



Michael Land, MD
WebMD ALLERGY AND
ASTHMA EXPERT



Brian Vickery, MD
WebMD CHILDREN'S
ALLERGIES EXPERT

Get expert answers to all your health questions.  WebMD.com

NEW

Announcing WebMD

healthy
BEAUTYSM

A new way to look at beauty.

Today's beauty means looking and feeling your best.

WebMD Healthy Beauty gives you the latest information from leading health experts on beauty products, nutrition, treatments and more.

For a more beautiful you. Inside and out.

Go to Healthy Beauty

face care

anti-aging

body care

hair care

cosmetic procedures

sun care

LEFT: STOCKBYTE/GETTY IMAGES; BLEND IMAGES/GLOW IMAGES

Pregnant Pause

By Maya Brown Zimmerman
WebMD.com community member

I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN I wanted to have children, but my husband, Mark, and I did a lot of homework before we decided to try to get pregnant.

I have Marfan syndrome, a genetic disorder that affects the body's connective tissue. The biggest risk is an enlarged aorta (the major artery taking blood away from the heart). This can lead to an aneurysm (a bulge) or a dissection (a tear) in that artery.

To protect their hearts, people with Marfan syndrome must limit contact sports and strenuous activity, as well as how much they lift, because lifting can strain the aorta. Most of us shouldn't lift more than 20 pounds.

Women are especially at risk for an enlarged aorta during pregnancy and a torn aorta during labor. Fortunately, my aorta hardly grew at all during both of my pregnancies, and I had a successful cesarean section both times.

I knew before I got pregnant that once my babies were born, I'd only be able to carry them until they were 20 pounds. I loved "wearing" them until they reached that weight, but toddlers want to be carried, too. I compromise by spending time sitting on the couch or floor so they can crawl into my lap. I also have a diaper station on the floor, so I don't have to lift them to change them.

Like many people with Marfan syndrome, I find it painful to stand for long periods, and I also have some back problems, including scoliosis. When the pain gets bad, we have picnics on the floor so I don't have to lift my 3-year-old son, Miles, into a high chair.

We emphasize self-sufficiency with Miles. He gets in and out of the car by himself, for instance, and he used a stepladder to get in and out of his crib when I was pregnant with Julian, now 1.

I have had to handle far more than I imagined I could before I had children, including pain and fatigue, plus Julian has Marfan syndrome, too (a child has a 50% risk of inheriting the disorder if one parent has it). Some people have criticized us for deciding to have children, because of my high-risk pregnancies and the chance of passing on Marfan to my kids.


But Mark and I love both boys to pieces. We will find Julian the best doctors available and get him the best care possible. The National Marfan Foundation (www.marfan.org/marfan) has been a lifeline for us, and I know NMF will play a huge role in my son's life as well.

We will be the very best parents we can be. As my husband says, "There are no perfect parents, just perfect love."

Maya Brown Zimmerman didn't let Marfan syndrome keep her and her husband, Mark, from having children.



ERIC MULL

Read more stories and share your own in our [communities](#).  WebMD.com

What's your gut telling you?
Our expert answers your
top GI-health questions

GI Know

By Christina Boufis, WebMD Contributing Writer

Do you have bloating? Heartburn? Stomach pain? Jonathan Schreiber, MD, gastroenterologist at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore and clinical assistant professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, sheds light on gastrointestinal disorders.

1 ARE GASTROINTESTINAL OR GI CONDITIONS DIFFERENT FOR MEN AND WOMEN?

There are definitely some differences, and part of the reason is probably related to basic physiology. One of the most common GI conditions is irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS. For years, we've known more women than men have IBS, though that distinction might have been overplayed because men and women may deal with it differently. A man may just say, "I'm going to tough it out," and a woman may say, "I'm going to go to my doctor and see what's going on." So it looks to the doctor that women have more IBS, but that may not be the case.

Beyond that, there is likely some difference due to the way the muscles work in men and women. Think of the GI tract as a long tube from your mouth all the way down to the rectum, surrounded by muscles that are contracting all the time. Along the way are your stomach and other organs. There are studies suggesting that GI muscle motility is a bit slower in women than in men, and this is even more true when IBS is present.

If the muscles are moving really quickly in people with IBS, they get diarrhea. If the muscles are moving very slowly, they get constipation, and if the muscles are going into a spasm, they get pain. The slow muscle form is very common, but it's much more common in women than in men.

ALIX MINDE/GETTY IMAGES

Reviewed by
Louise Chang, MD
WebMD SENIOR MEDICAL EDITOR



Inflammatory bowel disease, or IBD, is fairly common in both men and women. The bowel lining gets inflamed and damaged, causing abdominal pain, diarrhea, sometimes bleeding. Doctors think the two types of IBD—Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis—are autoimmune diseases. You're probably born with some sort of a genetic predisposition, and then something triggers an immune reaction—whether it's some unusual infection or something dietary, we just don't know.

2 WHICH GI DISORDERS ARE ON THE RISE?

There's been a recent explosion of GERD, or gastroesophageal reflux disease, and nobody really has a good explanation why. Clearly our diet has something to do with it. We weigh more as a population now than we did five or 10 years ago.

There's also a big uptick in the number of people diagnosed with celiac disease, and it's probably not so much on the rise but just being recognized more. Celiac is an autoimmune condition, meaning your body's immune system is sort of turning against itself.

And the trigger for that is gluten, a protein in wheat and many other grains. If you have celiac disease, eating gluten causes your own antibodies to attack your bowel. People of Mediterranean descent and children seem to develop celiac disease more than other people. But what's been recognized recently is older people get it as well, with symptoms like constipation, diarrhea, bloating, and abdominal pain—all of which look very much like IBS.

3 ARE IBS AND GERD PREVENTABLE?

Prevention is really tough. They're both extremely common conditions, and gastroenterologists are often trying to treat them once they're already established.

Most people are not aware that smoking cigarettes doesn't just have a bad effect



Focusing on **stress management, exercise, and diet** is a key part of treating GI conditions.

on your heart and lungs but also on acid secretion. It tends to cause a lot more acid to come into your stomach.

Also, stress clearly plays a major role in most, if not all, GI disorders. When you're stressed, hormonal changes cause your stomach to produce more acid. And more acid can mean more acid reflux. IBS can also be stress-related. So controlling and managing stress is helpful. And for acid reflux, keeping your weight under control is critical because gaining weight can cause GERD.

4 ARE THERE ALTERNATIVE METHODS OR PROMISING NEW TREATMENTS?

Focusing on stress management, exercise, and weight loss and diet are not exactly alternative treatments, but I think they are

certainly a key part of treating all these conditions.

Another area I think is moving from alternative to mainstream is the use of probiotics: healthy germs in your digestive system. One of the main places we have healthy bacteria is in our colon, so if something interferes with those, you end up with problems with digestion—constipation, diarrhea, or abdominal pain. Now we know there are some things that probiotics may be extremely helpful for—including treating IBS.

Acupuncture is an alternative treatment that's probably going to become more accepted for treating GI disorders, including conditions like IBS. It's a little complicated, because for whom it works—and the mechanism for how it works—is unclear. But I think acupuncture definitely works for some folks as more than just stress reduction, though it certainly helps with that, too.

5 GI ISSUES AFFECT EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL HEALTH, NOT JUST PHYSICAL. WHAT CAN BE DONE?

It's sort of a joke: Which is more important? A cardiologist? A neurologist? Or a gastroenterologist? The bottom line is, if you're constipated, nauseated, having abdominal pain or diarrhea, it doesn't matter if everything else is working—you're still going to be miserable.

I see people every day who have major emotional issues and major bowel issues; there's just a very tight connection between the two. Part of it is pointing out the connection, part of it is listening, part of it is looking for things that help in both areas—like stress management and exercise—and part of it is sometimes helping you recognize there may come a time when you don't just need a gastroenterologist, you also need a psychologist or a psychiatrist to help you manage these things. If your GI tract is not happy, it's very hard to be a happy person. ■

JAMIE GRILL/GETTY IMAGES

ALOE VERA

Past Present

The ancient Egyptians used the aloe vera plant, which originated in Northern Africa, as a healing medication. They also presented the plant to dead pharaohs as a burial gift.

Look Sharp

The aloe vera plant (*barbadensis*) is a succulent, related to the cactus and the lily. It has a spiky appearance and is a common household plant.

Beauty Queen

Legend has it that aloe vera was one of Cleopatra's skin care secrets. The Egyptian queen is famous for her lavish makeup and experimental beauty treatments.

Burning Question

Often referred to as the "burn plant," aloe vera's gel is a common remedy for first-degree burns as well as sunburns. It's best when fresh from the plant, but many companies produce aloe vera gel that is more widely available.

Thirst Quencher

Aloe vera gel is about 99% water. The rest is composed of amino acids and vitamins A, C, and E, among other nutrients.

Dry Good

Aloe vera is a good moisturizer for dry or irritated skin. Hundreds of products, including cosmetics and lotions, contain aloe.

Clear the Air

The aloe plant's leaves have a large surface area, which makes them effective air purifiers for your home. —Ana Ferrer



TED MORRISON

Room to Breathe

Better living with asthma

Q I was diagnosed with asthma 21 years ago, with every year getting worse. I find myself on so many asthma meds that I have to carry a list with me. Keeping a full-time job to support my family is more difficult because of missed time. I try not to get down, but it's so hard not to. Is there anyone else who feels like I do?

▶ **randygirl**
WebMD's asthma community

Posted by ▶
janetplanet1220

Do you know what triggers your attacks? I keep a little notebook with me and write down how I am doing each day. If I have an attack, I write down what I was doing. After doing this for three months, it is getting easier to figure out what is happening. I have learned that dust, mold, cold air, bleach, damp musty places, and stress trigger it for me.

Posted by ▶
Aqua14

Stress is one of my triggers as well. I find practicing yoga helps, maybe because of the focus on breathing, maybe because of the calm meditation. Dust is also an issue for me, especially from old papers. If I wear a face mask, though, I may get itchy eyes but my asthma is not triggered. (I make sure the mask is made to keep out 95% of particles.)



Posted by ▶
Mary_M1959

To answer your question, yes! There are many of us out here, understanding what you are going through. This message board is great comfort. Come and check it out often. It really helps me out.

Posted by ▶
clengland

Don't give up; sometimes you have to demand different approaches used to treat your asthma. Only you know what works best, so keep trying. It is not easy and can be very complicated, but it can be controlled and you can have a fairly normal life.

Expert
tip

Cruise Control



Many of my patients feel overwhelmed with their medications and complex medical care when they have a chronic disease like asthma. But you can feel more in control. For instance, keep up your list of drugs, since it is easy to mix them up or forget which do what and when you're supposed to take them.

I also agree it's important to identify triggers so you can avoid flares; write them down in a journal, as janetplanet1220 suggests, and share with your doctor. Support helps, too, as you've discovered, so you can continually get help managing your asthma from others in the same situation. Finally, work closely with your asthma specialist to devise a long-term plan for better controlling your symptoms. He or she can suggest solutions you may not have considered.

Michael Land, MD
WebMD ALLERGY AND ASTHMA EXPERT

Give and get tips in the **asthma community**.



WebMD.com

Now another trusted way to make better health decisions.

WebMD Community

Discussions Tips Resources Experts

Access to world-class health experts and specialists

Insights from the largest health informed community

Connect to others through shared wisdom and real experiences

Welcome to the WebMD health network.

Get help. Give help.
on WebMD.com

[Go To Communities](#)

WebMD
Better information. Better health.

Fresh Start

Banish the effects of winter with expert tips to spring clean your complexion

Repair Shop

Revive dry skin with **Cetaphil Restoraderm Skin Restoring Moisturizer**.



Powder Play
Bare Escentuals bareMinerals Original SPF 15 Foundation does double duty.

Soothe Move

Aveeno Ultra-Calming Foaming Cleanser cleans without stripping.



Brush Off
Get a deep clean with the Clarisonic Mia Sonic Skin Cleansing System.

Bead It

The microbeads in Olay Skin Smoothing Cream Scrub make way for new skin.

You asked!

Q. Winter did a number on my face—my skin is dry, flaky, and irritated. How can I give it a fresh start for spring?



Ashley Jones, 27, account manager, Rockville, Md.

A. First, don't make the mistake of over-scrubbing, over-cleaning, and over-treating. The frosty temps might have damaged the outermost protective layer, exposing facial skin to irritants and bacteria.

The key to smoother skin for spring is hydration plus exfoliation. Slough off dry skin cells with a gentle exfoliator like **Olay Skin Smoothing Cream Scrub** (\$6.49), which combines a conditioning beta-hydroxy acid formula with microbeads. Beta-hydroxy acids loosen the dead cells of the epidermis, making room for new growth.

A mild unscented soap that won't strip away natural oils, like **Aveeno Ultra-Calming Foaming Cleanser** (\$6.99), will reduce moisture loss and maintain a healthy outer-skin layer. For a deeper clean, skip the washcloth and use a cleaning device like the **Clarisonic Mia Sonic Skin Cleansing System** (\$119). The brush has hundreds of bristles that lift and whisk away dead skin and dirt.

Rebuild your skin's outer layer with a barrier repair moisturizer such as **Cetaphil Restoraderm Skin Restoring Moisturizer** (\$14.99), which boosts hydration and reduces water loss. And don't forget to add sunscreen—SPF 30 or higher. Then add a makeup packed with moisturizers and vitamins (and more sunscreen). One to try: **Bare Escentuals bareMinerals Original SPF 15 Foundation** (\$26).

Glenn Kolansky, MD, Advanced Dermatology Surgery & Laser Center, Tinton Falls, N.J.



A. Most women find they need to moisturize more in the winter when the humidity drops and skin gets drier. Yet because skin can feel raw and sensitive, they're likely to skip exfoliation. The result, as you've discovered, is a dry, flaky complexion at the start of spring.

The best way to start anew is to exfoliate dry winter skin without leaving your face red and irritated. Mildly abrasive cleansers or ones with mild exfoliants like glycolic or lactic acids help eliminate flakes. For an at-home treatment that doesn't harm weather-worn skin, try a face mask that sloughs away dead cells, such as **REN Glycol Lactic Radiance Renewal Mask** (\$55), a blend of lactic, citric, and glycolic acids.

Exfoliate only a few times a week. Every other time, wash with a gentle cleanser like **CeraVe Hydrating Cleanser** (\$11.99), which has epidermis-softening ceramides to help skin retain moisture.

At night, apply a moisturizer with glycolic acid, lactic acid, or salicylic acid, which helps the gentle sloughing away of dead skin continue while you sleep. Try **Vivité Night Renewal Facial Cream** (\$47). Be sure to moisturize soon after washing your face, when the skin is still hydrated from the water it absorbs during cleansing. This technique locks in more water than when you apply lotion to dry skin.

For smoother-looking skin, **Bare Escentuals i.d. bareVitamins Skin Rev-er Upper** (\$21) is a must-try. Apply this primer lotion, infused with salicylic and glycolic acids, before makeup. Finally, always use a daytime moisturizer that contains an SPF 30 or higher to prevent sun damage and skin cancer.—Ayren Jackson-Cannady

Rachel Herschenfeld, MD, Dermatology Partners, Inc., Wellesley, Mass.



The opinions expressed in this section are of the experts and are not the opinions of WebMD. WebMD does not endorse any specific product, service, or treatment.

Gentle Giant
CeraVe Hydrating Cleanser softens and cleans skin.



Critical Mask
REN Glycol Lactic Radiance Renewal Mask's blend of acids gently sloughs skin.

Prime Time
Prep skin for makeup with Bare Escentuals i.d. bareVitamins Skin Rev-er Upper.

Sleep Tight
Wake up your skin with Vivité Night Renewal Facial Cream.

Spring Fling

Ensure your beauty stash is fresh with these when-to-toss guidelines from Roberta Sengelmann, MD, of the Santa Barbara Skin Institute in California.

Sunscreen

Trash SPF products that are past their expiration date (the FDA requires sunscreen makers to post it on the bottle) or more than three years old.

Eye cream

Chuck it after three months, or sooner if it's changed colors, smells funny, or stings when you put it on.

Body lotion

Keep for up to a year unless it stinks or has changed colors.

Mascara

The eyes are very sensitive to dirt, debris, and bacteria, so toss after three months.

Lipstick

While the color and texture may change slightly over

time, lipstick does not penetrate the skin, so you can keep for two years.

Liquid foundation and facial moisturizers

Whether packed with antioxidants and alpha-hydroxy acids (glycolic, lactic, salicylic, maltic) or not, they're good to go for up to six months.

Get more beauty-routine **spring cleaning tips.**



WebMD.com



Lip Service

Can you get a plumper pout from a tube?

Call it the pursuit of the padded pucker. In the last decade, scores of over-the-counter products have hit the cosmetics aisle, promising to produce fuller, sexier lips.

But do they work? “Women need to be realistic in what they can expect from these products,” says Paul M. Friedman, MD, a clinical assistant professor of dermatology at the University of Texas Medical School. In other words, none will come close to enlarging your lips the way a costly (\$400 and up) injection of a filler from your dermatologist would.

“These products can give you a temporary enhancement that might last a couple of hours,” says dermatologist Patricia Farris, MD, a clinical assistant professor at Tulane University School of Medicine.

Tinted or clear, in gloss, balm, stick, gel, or pot form, traditional lip plumpers fatten the lips by irritating them. Ingredients such as cinnamon, ginger mint, wintergreen, or capsaicin (the fiery compound in hot peppers) boost blood flow to the lips, causing mild swelling and redness. They also create a telltale tingle or stinging. That burn, along with the high shine of many plumping products, may be what leads to the illusion of a fuller pout.

If women find the bulge worth the burn, dermatologists see little risk, as long as they’re not overusing them and if they’re not allergic to the active ingredients. “In general, I’m not a big fan of any ingredient that irritates the skin,” Friedman says. “If you apply too



much of these plumpers and use them too frequently, they can potentially cause dryness and scaling.” Still, he adds, “I haven’t seen any problems in my practice, and my wife uses them herself. They can provide a short-lived gratification.”

“These won’t give you an Angelina Jolie mouth,” Farris adds. “But they might have some therapeutic benefits.”

At the very least, she says, many of the lip-conditioning plumpers contain humectants that help lips retain moisture. “That hydration alone can improve lines and wrinkles, and in turn may give you a bit more fullness,” Farris says.

And some plumpers contain hyaluronic acids, which increase lip volume by pulling moisture from the environment or trapping water that would otherwise evaporate from the skin.—Shelley Levitt

“Traditional lip plumpers fatten the lips by irritating them with ingredients such as cinnamon.”



PUCKER UP

Dermatologist Patricia Farris, MD, offers more lip-plumping tips:

Smooth Makeup artists sometimes rub a wet, nubby washcloth across the mouth to prep lips for lipstick. Lip exfoliators are a convenient update to this old trick. They use gentle ingredients like sugar or poppy seeds or mild acid exfoliants to buff away dry skin. Add a plumping lip gloss to create an illusion of voluptuous lips.

Boost A new generation of lip plumpers might deliver more lasting results. Sold in two-step sets with a cosmetic plumper, these products



contain ingredients such as peptides, marine collagen, and human growth factors. Use them regularly, these products claim, and they’ll stimulate your lips to produce more pout-boosting collagen and elastin. Do they work? Some have other, more fast-acting ingredients, so you may see a result either way.

TOP: YURI DOLZHEV/GETTY IMAGES; MINKAGLOW IMAGES

Get the full picture on [lip treatments](#). WebMD.com



Fear Factor

Do you have dental phobia?

Does the thought of succumbing to the dentist’s chair send a jolt of anxiety through your body? When it comes to triggering a fear response, few things can set people off like an upcoming trip to the dentist.

That fear can set in early. Threatening comments from a parent, such as “If you don’t brush your teeth, you’ll have to go to the dentist,” can leave a lasting negative impression. More common, a painful experience at the dentist’s office during childhood triggers anxiety that carries over into adulthood, says David Hershkowitz, DDS, associate chair of the Department of Cariology & Comprehensive Care at NYU. But today, “there’s no need any longer for people to fear dental pain,” Hershkowitz says. “Modern dentistry is virtually painless.”

New dental tools have come a long way over the past few decades. Needles that inject numbing agents, for example, are super-thin compared with fatter versions of yesteryear. They are also disposable. Needles were once used over and over again and sterilized between patients, Hershkowitz says. Repeat use dulls a needle’s point over time, causing more pain upon injection. Improved methods and tools also help dentists slow the rate at which medicine works its way into gums, easing discomfort from the pressure of the medication as it’s quickly released from the syringe.

A host of medications and new products help reduce pain, too. Topical anesthetic gels and dental patches used to numb gums keep patients comfortable during injections and deep cleanings. Nitrous oxide (“laughing



gas”) relaxes patients during more involved procedures. So does intravenous conscious sedation, which eases pain and discomfort while keeping you awake with medications given through an intravenous line placed in either the hand or arm.

And because a little distraction goes a long way, iPods for your listening pleasure, big-screen televisions, iPads, and virtual reality glasses that put your eyes and mind in another realm are common items in the modern dentist’s office. So is calming décor—fresh flowers, miniature waterfalls, and bright, inviting wall colors.

To truly calm your fears, it never hurts to remember that inside the dentist’s white coat is a person who cares as much about your comfort as your teeth. “Look at the doctor as someone who’s also a friend,” Hershkowitz says.—Lisa Zamosky

SPEAK UP

Putting off a dentist visit because of fear? Consider the following tips from David Hershkowitz, DDS. If your dentist doesn’t respond or comply with your requests, find another one.

Talk it over. “A good dentist should begin a visit by asking you open-ended questions about what bothers you so he or she knows what not to do,” Hershkowitz says. A simple “Tell me about any difficulties you’ve had during past dentist visits” may help you open up and relax. “If you talk about it first, it will remove the anxiety.”

Be prepared. Ask your dentist in advance what you can expect during your visit and how procedures, such as injections, are handled. “There’s nothing wrong with asking the doctor, ‘What will you do to let me know I’m in control?’” says Hershkowitz.

Give a cue. Establish a sign, such as raising your hand, to let your dentist know if you’re uncomfortable and need him to stop working immediately.

“An estimated 30 million to 40 million Americans have dental fear.”



PIXTAGLOW IMAGES

How do you cope at the dentist? Tell [our community](#). WebMD.com



Lose It

Cut the fat talk from your daily diet. Dissing yourself can sabotage your weight-loss plans

“I can’t believe I let myself go again. I’m such a big, fat failure. My mother was right when she told me no one will ever love a fat woman.”

These words poured out of the mouth of a 45-year-old accomplished professional and mother of two. She’d just been passed up for a key project in favor of a (so she said) younger, more attractive

here into the ‘negative speak’ piggy bank.” Her eyes widened and she nodded. “I didn’t realize I was doing that to myself.”

Most people don’t. I didn’t collect the money, but gave her fair warning that next time I would. Our exchange was an eye-opening experience for her. She ended up buying her own piggy bank and monitoring her mouth at home.

And it can be for you, too. It’s common for women and men to berate themselves about their weight in public, but the genders typically do it differently. Men more often use humor: “Man, I’m a lardo and as big as a house—your house!” Women tend to be more affected emotionally because their self-esteem is much more tied up with appearance.

At the end of the day, these verbal darts do nothing more than erode self-worth. This is fat talk, and it needs to be cut from your daily diet.

Fat talk goes both ways: You do it to yourself, and others can do it to you. My

patient’s mother, though well-intentioned, left an indelible scar when she associated love with how much fat a person carries on her body.

People of all sizes use fat talk—even a rail-thin woman who, after eating lettuce and tuna for lunch, despairs that she’s “so fat that I’m popping out of my jeans.” Fat talk not only leaves you with a poor body image and feelings of self-loathing, it can also lead to self-destructive behaviors such as overeating and withdrawing from social engagements.

TALK THERAPY

Try these ground rules to fight fat talk:

Re-educate others. When someone constantly comments about your weight and



appearance, you can have a frank discussion with them, saying, “Hey, I would appreciate it if

you would not make any references to my personal appearance.” Enough said. If they persist, reassess this relationship.

Pick a role model. Think about the people who inspire us to do great things. It’s not how they look, but their wisdom, accomplishments, brilliance, and passion that touch our hearts. Concentrate on your own gifts.

Be a role model. Your kids, family members, and friends listen to what comes out of your mouth. If it’s mostly self-disparaging, you’re giving them permission to rate their value in life on appearance alone. Spread hopeful love and support, not negative vibes. Let self-support go viral!



colleague. She blamed it on her weight, and spent the next five minutes disparaging herself.

Her weight wasn’t the issue. The colleague who got the gig, it turns out, was the boss’s niece. But it was enough to send my already sensitive patient into an all-out shaming, blaming, and self-bashing tirade. When she stopped to take a breath, I looked at her, smiled, and gently said, “That’ll be one dollar, please.” Puzzled, she asked why. I said, “Any negative self-talk is fined one dollar. It goes right



29% of girls in grades 7–12 report being teased by a family member about weight.

Get more **tough-love** tips from Dr. Peeke.



WebMD.com



Lone State

For kids on the playground and adults in the workplace, being left out hurts

When she switched jobs, Debra Yergen got the cold shoulder from people she considered close friends. Yergen had spent three years working at a community hospital in Washington state, but when she started her new position as director of communications for a regional medical center that competed with the hospital, her old work buddies disappeared—presumably because she left for the competition.

“At first, I thought my friends were just busy,” Yergen, now 40, says. “But when the holidays rolled around, I realized they were out of my life.”

recognition is thwarted. When people in a study were excluded in a simulated game of ball toss, brain scans showed more activity in the anterior cingulate cortex, a part of the brain that responds to pain, as well as the right ventral prefrontal cortex, an area involved in coping with pain. Williams’ research identified three stages of the response to being left out: pain, coping, and—if the exclusion goes on for a long time—depression and a feeling of helplessness.

When it comes to dealing with ostracism, “there’s a whole package of behaviors, thoughts, and percep-

tions you use to try to improve the chances you’ll get included,” Williams says. Those who feel excluded tend to pay closer attention to people’s facial expressions and unconsciously mimic their body language. They may go out of their way to please. Some people try to force others to pay attention to them. On the playground, that could mean shoving or hitting. In the workplace, it can show up as more subtly aggressive behavior such

as making demeaning comments about others.

Cognitive therapy helped Yergen mourn those lost friendships. “I realized I’m in control of how I respond,” she says. “That doesn’t mean there aren’t periods of grieving, but by getting help to process it, I can put it in a place where it doesn’t have to cause me ongoing pain.”—Susan Kuchinskas

OSTRACISM CAUSES REAL PAIN BECAUSE OUR BASIC NEED FOR BELONGING IS THWARTED.



Unfortunately, excluding others to punish them for perceived or real social gaffes prevails throughout the animal kingdom, and humans are as likely to do it as lions or chimps, says Purdue University psychologist Kipling D. Williams, PhD.

Ostracism causes real pain, Williams says, because our basic need for belonging, self-esteem, control, and

SNUB HUB

Ostracism always hurts. Kipling D. Williams, PhD, explains how to reduce the sting—and break the ugly cycle of exclusion:

Tap other support. If you’re excluded from one group, for example, on the job, look for support elsewhere. “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket,” Williams says. “Have different groups of friends.”

Don’t ostracize your children. Giving a kid the silent treatment when you’re angry can damage your relationship, Williams says. “If you absolutely feel you have to remove yourself from the situation, give an end point to it,” he advises. For example, say, “I can’t talk to you right now, so I’m going to leave for a few minutes. When I come back, we can talk.”

Teach kids that exclusion hurts. Exclusion is an insidious form of bullying, Williams believes, and harder to document because it’s the absence of behavior. Talk to children about how much it hurts, whether they’re victims or perps. At the Williams household, the rule is, “You can’t say ‘you can’t play.’”



In 13 of 15 U.S. school shooting incidents between 1995 and 2001, the shooters had been ostracized at school.

Feeling left out? Talk it out in our **community**.



WebMD.com



Lost in the Night

If you snooze, will you lose? Get the skinny on the sleep–weight loss connection

You probably know the secret to losing weight is to hit the treadmill more and the refrigerator less. But what if there's another way to lose fat? Wouldn't it be great if you could sleep yourself slim?

Maybe you can. A 2010 University of Chicago Department of Medicine study found that when 10

In fact, the short sleepers in the Chicago study burned almost 400 fewer calories per day than those who slept closer to eight hours. Whether this was because of the increased hormone or because the short sleepers were tired and probably not as active as their well-rested counterparts is still an open question.

Less murky, researchers say, is that insufficient sleep does seem to undermine your attempt to lose weight by changing the way your body stores and uses fat—and by robbing your body of lean muscle tissue.

"When you change sleep, everything changes in your body," explains Mignot. "There may be a whole cascade of events that could

people were put on identical calorie-restricting diets, those who slept about 7.5 hours a night lost twice as much fat as those who slept only 5.5 hours. The latter group lost more lean muscle instead.

Why would sleeping less cause you to lose more muscle than fat? "It's very difficult to tell for sure," says Emmanuel Mignot, MD, PhD, director of the Stanford Center for Sleep Sciences and Medicine. "But there are a couple of theories." One is that shortened sleep increases ghrelin, the hormone that tells you to eat more. Excess ghrelin also makes your body hold on to fat and spend less energy.

change your metabolism generally." In addition, studies show shortened sleep causes people to not only eat more, but also to eat more high-calorie junk food, adds Mignot.

To date, no one has conducted a long-term study with a large group of people. And no sleep study has shown the cause and effect behind sleep and weight gain or loss. "One way to prove it would be to have people sleep more and see if they lose weight after six months or a year," says Mignot. Volunteers?—Christina Boufis

SLEEP AND SLIM

Michael Breus, PhD, ABISM, WebMD sleep expert and author of *The Sleep Doctor's Diet Plan: Lose Weight Through Better Sleep*, offers these tips for better sleep:

Lose the snooze button. Set your alarm clock for the exact time you need to wake up, not 15 minutes before. That way you can get the most calorie-burning stage of sleep, REM or rapid-eye-movement sleep, which occurs in the hours before you wake.

Enforce a curfew. Shut down the gadgets one hour before lights out to decrease your exposure to electronics. Light from technology screens can inhibit production of melatonin, the hormone that signals your body it's time to sleep.

Keep the lights off.

Turning on a light to go to the bathroom in the middle of


the night tells your brain it is morning and can wake you up. Use a nightlight instead.



LEFT BLEND IMAGES/GLOW IMAGES; TETRAGLOW IMAGES



The average 45-year-old woman who is 5' 5" and 140 pounds burns about **56 calories per hour** of sleep.

Resolve to **sleep better** this year.  **WebMD.com**



Proof Positive

Puppies and kittens are cute—but can wreak havoc. Protect your pets and your house

Katherine Miller once lost her kitten inside her studio apartment. "I was panicked. She was only 8 weeks old, and she just disappeared," Miller says. "She was gone for the entire day, and I couldn't figure out what was going on." Fortunately, "that evening, I heard this tiny meow and realized it was coming from my dresser." Her kitten had climbed through

See the world at pet eye-level. "Pets definitely explore their environments by tasting and they put everything in their mouths. We think children are bad—but that's nothing compared to what a pet will do," says Bernadine Cruz, DVM, a veterinarian in Laguna Hills, Calif., who recalls hearing about one Labrador puppy that swallowed 13 golf balls. Get

down on the floor and check every room for hazards, she says. Look for exposed electrical cords, poisonous houseplants, and small objects, such as earrings, hair scrunchies, and toys.

Train your pet to chew on acceptable objects. If you catch your puppy or kitten chewing on your leather boot, clap your hands to interrupt the act, Miller says. "No punishment, no anger," she says. Just make it a teachable moment. "Direct that behavior onto an appropriate object: a chew toy, a rawhide—something that's safe and rewarding."

Give your kitten a scratching post. It's useless to punish a kitten that claws the sofa, because scratching is a natural behavior, Miller says. Instead, provide a scratching post or pad. "Cats like to scratch when they wake up. It's part of their waking up, stretching routine," she says, so station the post or pad near where your cat likes to sleep.—Katherine Kam

SAFETY FIRST

Here are more pet-proofing pointers from vet Bernadine Cruz, DVM, and Katherine Miller, of the ASPCA:

Tuck electrical cords well behind or under furniture, or confine them within plastic cord protectors.

Screen all windows tightly. So many cats and small dogs are hurt or killed falling out of unscreened windows that veterinarians have a term for it: "high-rise syndrome."

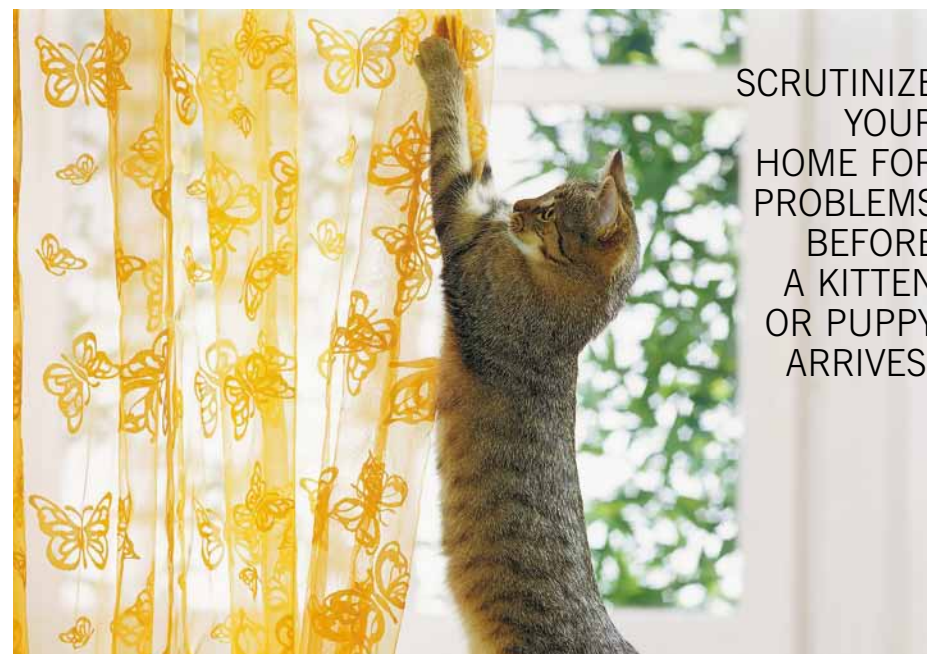
Keep cleaning supplies, insecticides, medications, and other potential poisons in a closed cabinet beyond pets' reach. Protect dogs and cats from rat bait and ant traps, too.

Make sure your pets can't get into trash cans, which can be full of toxic items, sharp objects, and human foods harmful to pets.

Avoid draperies with long cords and tassels that can strangle a pet. Beware of mini-blinds, which can get dented badly if a dog rushes to the window.

Trim your pet's nails regularly to prevent damage to leather and vinyl furniture.

SCRUTINIZE
YOUR
HOME FOR
PROBLEMS
BEFORE
A KITTEN
OR PUPPY
ARRIVES.



a small gap at the bottom of the furniture and was trapped inside a drawer.

That's why it's so important to scrutinize your home for problems before a kitten or puppy arrives, says Miller, director of applied science and research at the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Consider these expert pet-proofing tips:



Exercising your dog vigorously for **30 minutes a day** may tire her enough to decrease destructive behavior.

Get more tips to protect your **four-legged friends.**  **WebMD.com**



Bargain Rights

What do the doctor's office and a yard sale have in common? You can negotiate for deals at both

You haggle at the car dealership, at the farmers market, and at flea markets. But your doctor's office? That doesn't occur to most people. Yet there's a lot of room for negotiation over medical care costs, says John Santa, MD, a medical expert with *Consumer Reports*.

Simply speaking up about money can make a difference in what you'll ultimately pay, Santa says. "When people are stressed financially, that's helpful information [for a doctor] in terms of taking care of

And it turns out the price of real estate isn't the only thing dictated by location. "You may be able to get elective surgery much less expensively in an ambulatory surgery center than in a full-service hospital," Santa says. Just do your homework: Treatment in a doctor's office if your procedure requires the sophistication of a hospital isn't worth the cheaper price tag.

THINKING LIKE A SHOPPER WHEN CHOOSING MEDICAL CARE CAN SAVE A BUNDLE.

them medically," he says. "That communication to some degree ends up being a negotiation."

Most doctors will be responsive, Santa says, and may offer you less expensive alternatives. For example, a watch-and-wait approach, as opposed to rushing into costly tests and specialist visits, can save a lot of money without necessarily sacrificing quality. So can generic drugs.

Doctors can also use their relationship with local hospitals to help with big bills. "In most cases, if a physician gives the hospital a call and says my patient is struggling with a bill and asks them to help, they'll do that," Santa says.

Just thinking like a shopper when choosing medical care can save a bundle, he says. As all good shoppers know, cash is king. If you have it, use it to negotiate with your doctor or hospital for a better price. Look on websites like HealthcareBlueBook.com for information about fair pricing in your area.

SHOP TALK

John Santa, MD, offers tips for saving money on hospital stays:

Insist on efficiency. If you're having surgery, ask to be admitted to the hospital the morning of your procedure rather than the night before. Also ask to be discharged as early as is safe and reasonable.

Demand focus. Be clear that you want your care to focus on the particular procedure for which you were hospitalized. "Let them know, I don't want anybody ordering another X-ray or set of blood tests. My doctor will take care of that when I'm discharged," Santa says.

Don't pay for mistakes. Billing errors are common. Insist on an itemized bill and a copy of your medical record after treatment, and make sure they're consistent. Don't pay for any service, device, or drug you didn't use. If hospitalization led to an infection, demand that any extra hospital days needed to treat it be removed from your bill.

Prescription prices vary widely from one pharmacy to another, so be sure to shop around for drugs, too. If you can't afford your medications, talk with your doctor about programs that help patients get the drugs they need for free.

Santa acknowledges that many people fear their doctors won't see them or suggest the care they need if they try to bargain. "If that's the case, you don't have a good doctor," Santa says. It's time to shop for a new one.—Lisa Zamosky



PETER DAZELEV/GETTY IMAGES



Patients without insurance are **charged up to 10 times the amount** Medicare pays for the same procedure.

Check out our [Health Insurance Navigator](#) blog. [WebMD.com](#)



Singular Sensation

Let the guilt go, parents of only kids. They're not more likely to grow up spoiled or lonely

"Is he your only?" Everyone from supermarket cashiers to my parents' friends asks me that question. When I answer "yes," I often get a pitying look—or worse, "Aren't you afraid he'll be lonely?"

I always intended to have two children, but when my son turned out to be more challenging than my husband and I envisioned, our plans changed.

number of one-child families is higher now, from just under 10% in 1976 to 18% today. Susan Newman, PhD, a social psychologist, parenting expert, and author of *The Case for the Only Child: Your Essential Guide*, says the reasons for this include infertility issues (we're waiting longer to get pregnant) and financial pressures, thanks to a sluggish economy coupled with

the high cost of raising a child (nearly \$227,000 from birth to college). Still, some of us can't shake the feeling we've done something wrong.

There's no reason for guilt, Newman says. She's reviewed dozens of single-child family studies and finds that only children aren't any worse off than their peers with siblings. "The studies all show that only children are not spoiled. They're no more lonely than other children, and they actually make as many friends as children with siblings," she says.

THE NUMBER OF ONE-CHILD FAMILIES HAS RISEN FROM JUST UNDER 10% IN 1976 TO 18% TODAY.

Although my husband has made peace with our decision, I've lost sleep worrying my son will grow up spoiled or lonely. I fear he'll have to shoulder the caregiving burden when my husband and I get older.

Although our culture perpetuates the idea that the perfect family includes at least two children, the

Having an only child isn't all rosy, though. Instead of solving sibling squabbles, parents must help their lone child fend off boredom and self-absorption.

After being asked the only-child question too many times now, I've come up with a response. "We stopped at perfection," I say. And leave it at that.—Stephanie Watson

RAISING ONLYS

Have an only child? Susan Newman, PhD, offers these tips:

The More, The Merrier

Make your house "kid central." Invite neighborhood and school friends to drop by. Sign your child up for activities like band or soccer so he'll never lack for companionship.

Home Alone It's OK for only children to fly solo. "Alone time is a plus because it helps with creativity and learning how to use time productively," Newman says.

No Pressure Don't pin your dreams of being a star athlete or concert pianist on your child—that's a heavy burden for any kid to bear. Let her pursue her own dreams.

TMI If you planned to have more kids but it didn't work out, don't share that. "Then your child starts believing he's not enough," Newman says.

Table Talk Include your child in the conversation. Not having sibling distractions at the dinner table gives you an opportunity to enrich her vocabulary and knowledge by involving her in more "adult" discussions.

WESTEND61/GLOW IMAGES



58% of U.S. adults believe the **ideal family includes two children or fewer.**

Raising an only child? Give and get help in the [parenting community](#). [WebMD.com](#)



ANATOMY OF A RADISH

World Traveler

First cultivated in China, radish crops spread through the Northern Hemisphere and into Europe in the 1500s. Radishes had reached Massachusetts by 1629.

Kissing Cousins

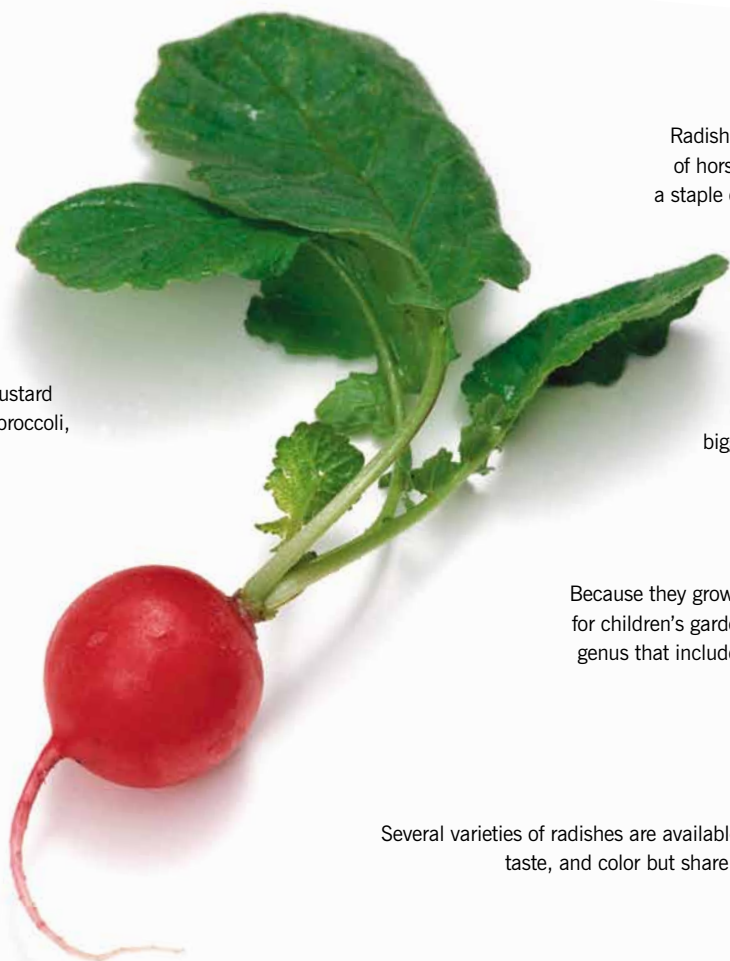
Radishes are members of the *Brassicaceae* (mustard or cabbage) family. The root is related to kale, broccoli, cauliflower, and horseradish, among others.

The Lowdown

Radishes are a great low-cal snack; one cup of sliced radishes has only 19 calories.

C Food

Radishes are a good source of vitamin C; one cup provides 29% of the Recommended Daily Allowance.



Hot Stuff

Radishes are related to wasabi, a type of horseradish, which in paste form is a staple condiment of Japanese cuisine.

State Fare

Most states grow radishes, but California and Florida boast the biggest crops in the United States.

Fast Food

Because they grow rapidly, radish plants are ideal for children's gardens. The scientific name for the genus that includes radishes is *Raphanus*, Greek for "quickly appearing."

Different Strokes

Several varieties of radishes are available year-round. They vary in size, taste, and color but share nutritional values.—*Ana Ferrer*

healthy recipe

Red Radish and Greens Salad



Makes 4 servings

Ingredients

Dressing

- 1 tbsp lime juice
- 2 tbsp orange juice
- 1 tbsp white balsamic vinegar (or red wine vinegar)
- 3 tbsp walnut or olive oil
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- ¼ tsp pepper
- dash of salt

Salad

- 4 cups mixed greens
- 1 cup thinly sliced red radishes
- 1 large apple, quartered, cut into julienne strips
- 1 orange, peeled, membranes removed and separated into sections
- ½ cup shredded carrots
- ½ cup jicama, peeled, cut into julienne strips
- ¼ cup coarsely chopped walnuts, toasted
- ¼ cup feta cheese

Directions

- Place dressing ingredients in a large bowl, whisk together, and set aside.
- Combine greens, sliced radishes, apple strips, orange sections, shredded carrots, and jicama strips in a large salad bowl.
- Toss salad with dressing and place on 4 plates.
- Garnish each plate with walnuts and feta cheese.

Per serving: 248 calories, 5 g protein, 8 g carbohydrate, 18 g fat (3 g saturated fat), 8 mg cholesterol, 5 g fiber, 13 g sugar, 175 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 62%

TOP: DATACRAFT CO LTD/GETTY IMAGES; LOUISE LISTER/STOCKFOOD

Relish the radish! Get [more recipes](#).



WebMD.com

Taking the Fifth

You'd think for a chef, eating frequent meals wouldn't be an issue. Yes, I understand the concept: Five small meals a day takes the edge off your appetite, evens out blood sugar levels, and keeps your energy steady. But I confess: I don't always eat this way. Although my fitness trainer encourages me to eat healthy food every few hours, my meals usually look like this: coffee, a bit more coffee, lunch at 3, dinner at 9. Then I start over again the next morning.

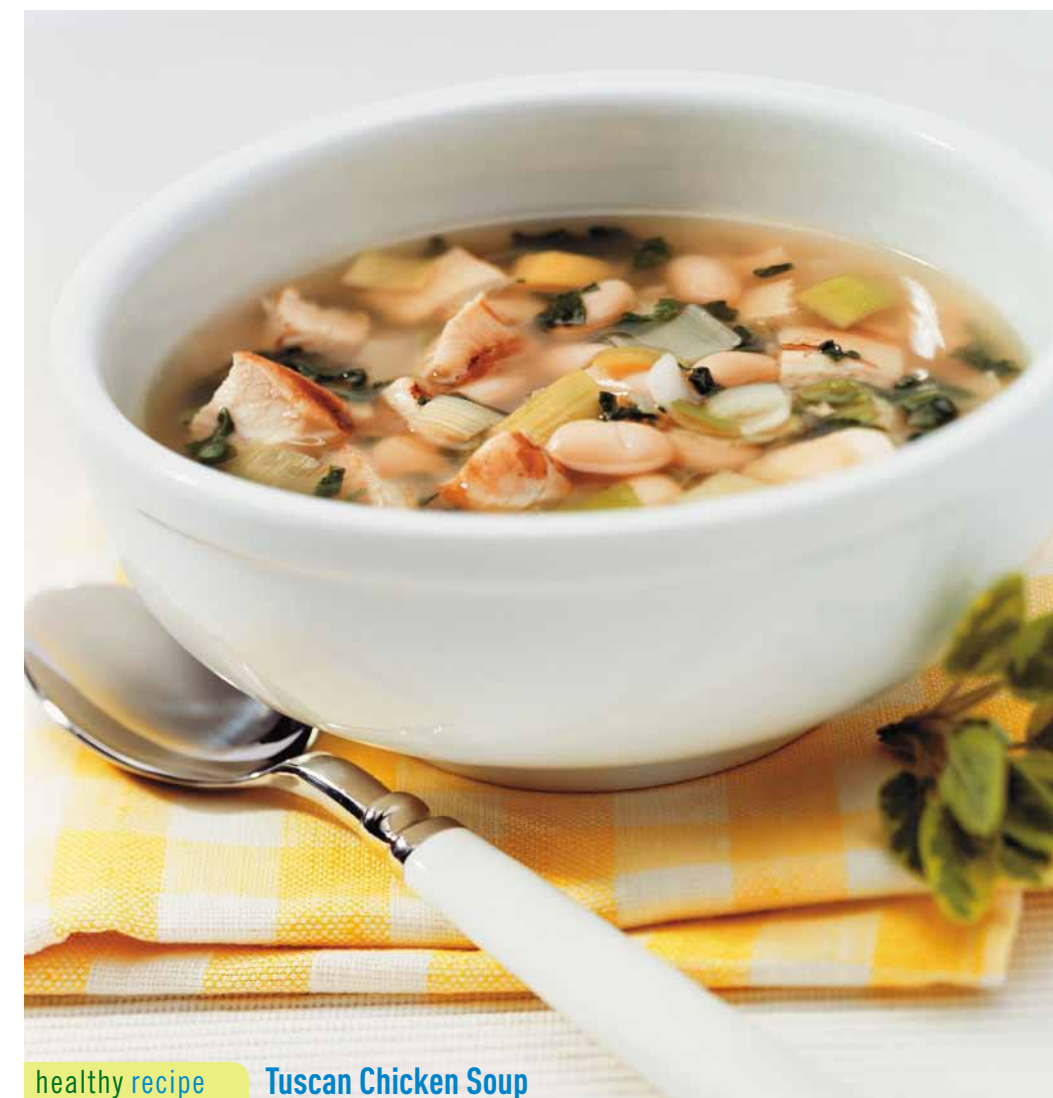
Recently, I decided to try to change this bad habit. Here's what I learned:

Plan ahead. Five meals a day equals breakfast, lunch, dinner, and two snacks. To do this right, you need to plan what you'll eat every day for each "meal." And you need to schedule eating every two to three hours.

Stock up. If you don't have healthy food on hand, you're going to grab whatever is closest, so before you try a five-meal-a-day program, stock up on good food: veggies, fruit, complex carbs, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy products such as milk, yogurt, and cottage cheese.

Go for taste. Choose snack foods that will sustain you and taste good. Think healthy and satisfying. Whip up a smoothie: Blend fruit, milk, yogurt, and a little honey for a sweet, filling snack packed with vitamins, fiber, protein, and calcium. Combine carbs and protein to stay full longer. Think whole wheat toast with peanut butter or a hard-boiled egg, whole grain pasta with olive oil and cheese, or oatmeal with fruit, milk, and honey. Or make yourself a big pot of healthy soup (like my Tuscan chicken soup) to heat up for lunches or snacks.

ROBERT REIFF/STOCKFOOD



healthy recipe

Tuscan Chicken Soup

Makes 6 servings

Ingredients

- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp chili flakes
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 8 cups low-sodium, fat-free chicken broth
- 1 14.5-oz can Italian plum tomatoes, crushed
- 2 halves or 1 full boneless chicken breast, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 medium Yukon Gold potato, diced

- 1 can no-salt Italian white beans, chickpeas, or kidney beans, drained and rinsed (about 1½ cups)
- 2 to 3 stalks red chard, cut into 1-inch pieces, tough ribs removed
- 2 large carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 ribs celery, diced
- 3 tbsp minced fresh Italian parsley
- 2 tbsp grated Parmesan cheese
- salt and pepper to taste

Per serving: 270 calories, 23 g protein, 34 g carbohydrate, 6 g fat (1 g saturated fat), 24 mg cholesterol, 8 g fiber, 3 g sugar, 321 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 20%

Directions

- In a large pot on medium heat, sauté garlic and chili flakes in olive oil.
- Add broth and tomatoes, and stir.
- Add chicken. After about 5 minutes, add potato and gently boil about 15 minutes.
- Add beans, chard, carrots, and celery, and simmer a few more minutes. Don't overcook.
- Ladle soup into warm bowls. Top with parsley, Parmesan, and salt and pepper.

What will help you **lose weight**?

Introducing the

WebMD Food & Fitness Planner

In just a few clicks, customize a plan to help you reach your weight and fitness goals. Studies have shown that people who keep a food journal lose twice the weight than those who rely on diet and exercise alone.*

Backed by the world's leading health experts and dietitians.



Best of all, it's free.
So start planning today.

Get Started

*American Journal of Preventive Medicine, August 2008

healthy eats

NUTRITIOUS AND DELICIOUS

Reviewed by
Carolyn O'Neil, MS, RD
WebMD NUTRITION EXPERT



How I Got My Kid to Like Walnuts

“

I've learned
not to make any
assumptions.

”



Felice Bogus,
46, small
business owner,
Raleigh, N.C.

Felice Bogus is used to the vagaries of childhood tastes. Her 9-year-old daughter, Margalit, is open to foods such as kimchi-flavored seaweed while rejecting kid-meal mainstays like hamburgers. But that can flip-flop from one day to the next.

“I've learned not to make any assumptions,” says Bogus. So when she packed a walnut-heavy trail mix into her daughter's lunch, she watched to see what would happen. Unfortunately, the walnuts came back—three times. “Once was, ‘Just didn't feel like it.’ Twice was, who knows? But after three walnut rejections, I thought, ‘Yeah, this is just not working.’”

Bogus didn't give up, though, because she values walnuts' nutritional benefits. She dug deeper for another solution. “When Margalit was little, one of the first solid foods she loved, and never stopped loving, was pesto,” says Bogus. “So that was the logical entry point.” Bogus replaced the traditional pine nuts with toasted walnuts. Happily, Margalit has given walnut pesto a thumbs-up every time. “It's especially good served with any kind of grilled or sautéed fish,” Bogus says.—Monica Kass Rogers

TOP: ARRAS/STOCKFOD; FOODCOLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

healthy recipe

Go Nuts

Ancient Greeks believed walnuts could heal everything from baldness to burns. Some of that was bunkum, but scientists today tout a host of benefits the Greeks didn't even suspect. For starters, the walnut has significant amounts of ALA—plant-based omega-3 fatty acids (2.5 grams per 1-ounce serving), which can help reduce “bad” (LDL) cholesterol and cut the risk of heart disease. Walnuts are also good for the brain. Researchers at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Mich., recently showed that walnuts boost cognitive function. An ounce of walnuts provides 4 grams of protein, 2 grams of fiber, and high levels of antioxidants. Walnuts are also high in “good” fats (1 ounce has 13 grams of polyunsaturated fatty acids plus the ALAs).

→ Toasty Tamer

Walnuts' strong flavor can take a little taming for some palates. That's partly due to the thin “skin”—the pellicle—around the nutmeat—which contains tannins, another good nutrient for heart health. Try toasting the nuts, which mellows the taste, adds crunch, and enhances aroma. Preheat your oven to 350°F and spread 2 cups nuts in a single layer. Bake 8 to 10 minutes. Mix into smoothies; sprinkle on cereals, yogurt, and salads; or grind to use as a crust for fish or poultry. For a tasty alternative to peanut butter, put 2 cups toasted walnuts in a food processor and pulse until paste-like. Add a pinch of salt and slowly add 2 tsp walnut oil until the butter binds together.

→ Pesto, Presto!

Fresh and beautifully bright green, this is the walnut pesto that won over Bogus's daughter. Drop 3 unpeeled garlic cloves in boiling water and cook 45 seconds. Drain water; peel and mince cloves. Combine garlic with ¼ cup toasted walnuts, 2 cups mint leaves, 7 tbsp olive oil, and a pinch of sea salt in a food processor. Grind until smooth, stirring in ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese at the end (substitute crumbled feta cheese, if you like). Serve over grilled fish or toss with whole wheat pasta.



Get nutty with your dinner tonight! Find a **recipe**.



WebMD.com



CLUB

Champion

So many of us dream of having it all, and then there's Jennifer Lopez.

A plum TV gig as a judge on Fox's *American Idol*? Check. Recording success, with more than 55 million records sold? Check. Plus a movie career, a clothing line, endorsement deals, a production company, two beautiful children, and a glowing presence that belies any sleep deprivation. It's enough to make the rest of us pull the covers over our heads in the morning and accept defeat.

Yet Lopez, 42, insists that everyone has the capacity for great achievements. In her new role as the first female spokesperson for the Boys & Girls Clubs of America in its 152-year history, Lopez reminds people that "Jenny From the Block," as she once dubbed herself in song, is from a hardscrabble stretch in New York City's South Bronx. In the halls of her local Boys & Girls Club, Kips Bay, Lopez found a mentor who recognized and encouraged her love of music and dance.

Superstar and *Idol* judge **Jennifer Lopez** pays homage to her childhood heroes in her newest starring role, inspiring kids through her work with Boys & Girls Clubs of America

By Rebecca Ascher-Walsh, WebMD Contributing Writer

Reviewed by
Louise Chang, MD
WebMD SENIOR MEDICAL EDITOR



Boys & Girls Clubs of America (bgca.org) aims to put children on the right track and, against the odds, keep them there. "I'm honored to be an alumna from such a wonderful and celebrated organization," says Lopez, who works alongside actor Denzel Washington, a spokesman for the club for two decades. Like him, she aims to inspire the 4 million kids who show up daily at one of the 4,000 national clubhouses, where they play sports, take classes, eat healthy meals, and engage with mentors and peers in a nurturing environment. "I hope I can give back just a small amount of the encouragement and support I experienced in my young adult years at the Boys & Girls Club. It empowered me, and that's a gift I would like to continue giving," Lopez says. "If I encourage one boy or girl to believe, then I have succeeded."

The Boys & Girls Clubs boasts other famous alumni in sports and entertainment, including Kerry Washington, Magic Johnson, Shaquille O'Neal, Usher, Ashanti, and Martin Sheen. Even those who don't go on to fame have a head start on success: Ninety percent of club members graduate from high school, compared with the national average of 74%, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

"We provide a safe place where children can learn and grow with adult mentors who love them and won't let them fail," says the club's president and CEO, Roxanne Spillett. "Our vision is that every child who walks in our doors graduates from high school with a plan for the future. Our motto is 'Great futures start here,' and Jennifer is a beautiful example of that."

As the clubs' new voice, Lopez says she encourages children to embrace "empowerment, determination, and passion. Those are the ingredients to fulfilling your dreams." Even more crucial? Learning to take care of yourself, the earlier the better, she says. "No matter how busy or how demanding your life is, you need to ensure you are both physically and mentally fit," says Lopez, who credits plenty of sleep and taking time "just to breathe and clear my mind" with her own sense of feeling centered. Then, and only then, she says, "can you be the best at what you are doing at the moment, working or even being a mother."

Teach Your Children Well

Adult role models are crucial to a child's emotional development and well-being. "We have the important task of teaching children to grow up to be good citizens of the world," says Bonnie Maslin, PhD, a psychologist and author of *Picking Your Battles: Winning Strategies for Raising Well-Behaved Kids*. "Life is a team sport, and you want them to be really good members of the team." Maslin offers a few tips for parents:

Be consistent. "You don't need to punch a time clock or be Mother Teresa, but children need a sense of rhythm and predictability. It gives them a feeling of calm and internal organization, which are at the core of personal success," says Maslin. Whether you promise a child an hour a week for a certain activity or your family three weekly dinners, make it a priority.

Apologize when you let them down. "There's no shame in saying you're sorry, and that teaches children they can discover a better way to approach something later," she says.

Teach them to reach out. "The best antidote to bullying is friendship," Maslin says. "Teach a child how to be a good friend and also how to extend helping hands to strangers."

Be an available source. "Let them talk about whatever they want with their friends. But make sure *you* are the one giving them the information about important subjects," she advises.

Don't just give respect—ask for it. "Respect is a two-way street, and I think we lose track of that," says Maslin. "It's important to teach children that you are a person just as they are. Otherwise, life is like bumper cars, and we're just crashing into each other."—RAW



A who's-who-in-Hollywood get-together or a Boys & Girls Clubs of America alumni roundup? Both. How many of these famous Boys & Girls Clubs alums do you recognize?

PREVIOUS PAGE: TONY DURAN/CORBIS OUTLINE; BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA (2)

Dancing to the Top

Speaking of mothers, it was Lopez's mom, kindergarten teacher Guadalupe, who brought the then-14-year-old and her two sisters, Lynda and Leslie, to the Kips Bay club in 1983 when it opened to girls. The timing couldn't have been better: Boys & Girls Clubs alumnus and Ballet Hispanico dancer Larry Maldonado had just begun a performing arts program,

Lopez recalls of her years at the club. "The adults provided encouragement and so did my other friends there. I credit their hard work and dedication for instilling in me the drive to achieve and the determination to do my best with everything I do." Not to mention the self-discipline that is at the heart of her success. "Dancing taught me that," she says. "Rehearsing, even when I didn't want to."

Others noticed, too. "We had a track across the street and she would jog there, and I would run alongside her," says Boys & Girls Clubs VP Frank Sanchez Jr. The former director of Kips Bay's physical education department, he now works with Lopez in her role as spokeswoman. "She was always incredibly focused and driven. The Jennifer you see now is the same one you saw at the club."

“The Boys & Girls Clubs empowered me, and that’s a gift I would like to continue giving. If I encourage one boy or girl to believe, then I have succeeded.”

recruiting colleagues to come to the South Bronx and teach everything from salsa to ballet.

"Jen was immediately one of the more active members of our dance program," remembers Harold Maldonado Jr.—brother of Larry (now deceased)—who these days runs the Kips Bay club. "Every day she would say how much she looked forward to being with Larry to take dance classes, and she was always involved in teaching the younger students. One day, Larry said, 'Jen is going to make it,' and I said, 'All the kids are going to make it.' He said, 'Yes, but there's something special about her. She shows that certain potential.' She was very motivated."

"This was the first time in my life I realized anything was possible,"





From left: Lopez with fellow *Idol* judges Steven Tyler and Randy Jackson; Lopez on *Idol* with her kids, Max and Emme, both 4.

Her emotional connection to her local club kept her coming back even after she scored her first break as a Fly Girl dancer on the television series *In Living Color*, which aired from 1990 to 1994. And she clearly took the things she learned at Kips Bay to heart. Says Maldonado, “Every time I see Jennifer, in a commercial or a movie or a concert, I see a little bit of Larry in [her], and that makes me say, ‘Wow.’ He had such an impact on her life.”

Adds Sanchez, “When I hear her on *American Idol*, talking about young people’s careers, that’s her being Larry Maldonado. That’s how he raised her. It’s how he critiqued hundreds of boys and girls”—kindly, and with words of praise that Lopez embraces still.

“I don’t feel like I’m a ‘judge,’ per se,” Lopez says of her role on *Idol*. “I prefer that I’m a mirror of encouragement. I understand each one has a special dream, just like I have. I see myself in many of these contestants.”

Highs and Lows

Lopez knows that the path to achieving those dreams can be rocky sometimes. Take last year, certainly one of emotional upheaval for her. She and singer Marc Anthony, father of 4-year-old twins, Max and Emme, are in

“If you have the self-esteem to get through the downs—standing on your own and understanding that the present is not the future—getting up and brushing off will make the ups that much better.”



Lopez visits a Maribel Foundation clinic in Puerto Rico.

TOP LEFT: MICHAEL BECKER/FOX; AP PHOTO/DAVID J. PHILLIPS; LEFT: ALBERT MICHAEL/STARTRAKSPHOTO.COM; RIGHT: TONY DURAN/CORBIS OUTLINE

the process of getting divorced—a private episode played out in the tabloids. But Lopez believes hard times can be just as important as success. “Life is a series of ups and downs,” she says, and “if you have the self-esteem to get through the downs—standing on your own and understanding that the present is not the future—getting up and brushing off will make the ups that much better.”

Lopez’s professional life has never been more exciting. She stars in two upcoming movies, May’s dramedy *What to Expect When You’re Expecting* opposite Cameron Diaz, and the fall thriller *Parker* with Jason Statham. “Acting is one of my first loves and is incredibly inspiring,” she says.

On the television front, in addition to *Idol*, Lopez is both executive producer and host of the Fox show *¡Q’Viva! The Chosen*, which spots promising talent in Latin America. “It’s

been a profoundly rewarding experience for me,” she says. “We have found some incredible singers, dancers, and performers, and hopefully this show will change some of their lives. That feels good.”

Equally gratifying is her charity work: Lopez and her sister Lynda started The Maribel Foundation, which connects doctors with underserved communities. The first clinic opened in Puerto Rico last year, and another will start soon in Panama. “It’s such a personal love project for me and Lynda,” says Lopez. “When we became parents and our kids would be sick, we started thinking how lucky we are that it was possible to take care of them with good health care. There are so many parents in the world who do not have the same opportunity.”

Parenthood, Lopez says, is her most important motivation. “My life is entirely

different since Emme and Max have come into it. There is no greater love than being a mother. There is love, and then there is love.” Despite her other commitments, “my kids and family come first,” she insists. “As Emme and Max grow up, I want to share all of their experiences. They won’t happen twice. Balance is a challenge sometimes, but staying focused on priorities is practical. This is not all about me.”

These days, her favorite activity is walking in the park with her children. “To see what they see and hear what they say brings me so much joy.” And she is beginning to pass on to her twins the most important lessons she has learned. “If I could teach them anything, it would be to love yourself,” she says, before adding, “And don’t be so hard on yourself. Life is generous with second chances.” ■

You Glow Girl

Lopez’s tricks for feeling—and looking—radiant

Singer Jennifer Lopez is famous for her glow (also the name of her signature perfume), but it’s not all about access to the best makeup artists. “Beauty comes from inside,” says Lopez. “It’s been said many times, but I believe it’s the truth.” She offers tips for being your own radiant best:

Take time for yourself. “When you look good, you feel good. When you feel good, you are a better person and parent,” Lopez says. Finding “me” time doesn’t require a week at a spa. When Lopez has a moment, “I just breathe and clear my mind. Sometimes we just have to do nothing, just breathe.”

Let whimsy be your stylist. “In terms of style, I encourage other women to first be comfortable but have fun,” she says. “Life is meant to be fun!”

Surround yourself with people who make you laugh. “When I am with my girlfriends, sisters, and cousins, we just say and do ridiculous and silly things. We are Puerto Ricans with a lot of energy. Sometimes it gets loud!” Lopez says.

Take to your bed. “Sometimes we get caught up in what we need to do next and forget about what are the very essential and important things in life,” the singer says. “I treasure my time to sleep. It’s just as important as eating or exercise.”

Care for all aspects of your well-being. “I believe life is a balance of mind, body, and soul,” Lopez says. “As I journey through my life experience, I have a better understanding of how true this really is. When your life is balanced, you are happy and excel in everything.”—RAW



How do you inspire your kids? Share in the [parenting community](#).



WebMD.com

How **green** is your home life?
Take our healthy home checkup
to get your eco on, inside and out

CLEAN

By Heather Hatfield, WebMD Contributing Writer

Isn't it about time you jumped on the "going green" bandwagon? An eco-conscious frame of mind minimizes your impact on the environment. It also means better health and a cleaner home for your family. From mold prevention to HEPA filters and composting, your to-do list of environmental improvements should focus on the air you breathe, the land you own, and the way you clean. Where to start? Two top environmental experts offer 12 easy tips for going green and getting healthier.

Reviewed by
Michael W. Smith, MD
WebMD CHIEF MEDICAL EDITOR



SWEEP



Clean and Green

Carpet bomb Talk about unwanted guests: More than 30 spore-forming molds call your carpet home. But chemicals need not apply. An easy, nontoxic way to rid your plush rugs of disgusting dirt, grime, and mold is to get a vacuum fitted with the right filter—and use it correctly, says Eugene Cole, DrPH, professor of environmental health sciences at Brigham Young University. Look for a vacuum with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, which captures and traps particles like mold and dust. A good trick of the trade: Every push and pull should last about 20 seconds—10 seconds up and 10 seconds back—to ensure you're pulling the gunk out of your rug rather than just picking up crumbs.

Launder liabilities Yes, dry cleaning means your shirts and pants are neatly pressed. It also means giving chemicals a free ride into your home. According to Cole, dry-cleaned clothes are immersed in chemicals that can cause dizziness, fatigue, headaches, and more. Worse, they stay put for up to four days after you bring your clothes home—longer if you leave them in the bag. You have a few options. If you can't give up those freshly pressed shirts, air clothes out in the basement or garage for a few days before you wear them. Choice

two for your dry-clean-only clothes: Try professional wet cleaning, which uses a chemical-free formula. Where you can, save some money and do your own laundry and ironing.

Vinegar victory All-natural vinegar is a powerful cleaning agent without the toxic trouble of many products. Jason Marshall, ScD, lab director of the Toxics Use Reduction Institute at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell, explains that vinegar from your grocer's shelf destroys dangerous bacteria such as *E. coli*, knocking their numbers down from 1 million to a mere and lonely one. Simply spray undiluted vinegar on a surface, leave it for 30 seconds, then wipe clean. *Voilà!* You've achieved a nearly 100% reduction in bacteria.

Elbow grease For tougher jobs, mechanical cleaning (that is, good old-fashioned scrubbing) alone can remove almost 100% of bacteria, says Marshall. Hot water and soap on a clean microfiber towel will remove 99.9% of the germs you're trying to get rid of. If you're gung-ho for that extra 0.1%, use an earth-friendly, chemical-conscious cleaner that's been vetted by a green group such as the Environmental Protection Agency and marked with a seal, such as the DfE (Design for the Environment) label or the Green Good Housekeeping Seal.



Air Care

Dry idea Battling moisture should be a carefully waged war inside every house. The goal is to avoid mold, since vanquishing it might mean a chemical cleanup that's bad for your health and your home. The sweet spot is 30% to 60% humidity, enough to give your eyes, skin, and throat the water they need but not so much as to encourage funky fungus growth, explains Cole. An

inexpensive home humidity monitor will indicate where you are. If you've gone over the top, all you need is a dehumidifier to pull the wet stuff out of the air. Don't forget to check it, empty it, and clean it at least once a week.

Germ warfare HEPA filters work wonders in more than just vacuums—they're also fitted into air purifiers, which pull and trap particles like allergens, dust, and mold from the air. HEPA filters rank high on an efficiency scale known as MERV—or the minimum efficiency reporting value, typically around 17 on a scale of 1 to 20. To make your shopping easy, look for a purifier labeled as a "true" HEPA, which can remove more of the smallest particles faster—or 99.97% of airborne annoyances as tiny as 0.3 microns in size, which is pretty small. While air purifiers with HEPA filters are a low-environmental-impact, high-efficiency way to raise your indoor air quality, Cole says, manage your expectations: A freestanding unit will only clean the air in an average-sized room, not the whole house.

Smoke alarm Need another sign it's time to kick the habit? Smoking is one of the most effective ways to ruin the air in your home for everyone who lives there. Secondhand smoke is responsible for about 3,000 lung cancer deaths each year in nonsmoking adults and for respiratory issues in hundreds of thousands of children, according to an EPA report. Make this a rule in your house: Don't smoke at all or don't smoke inside. To mix toil with trouble, says Marshall, smokers who use harsh cleaners in their homes may find chemicals like ammonia or bleach worsen respiratory symptoms such as difficult breathing.

Fresh idea There's nothing like a little fresh air, suggests Marshall. One of the easiest ways to go green for your health is to simply open a window—the way Mother Nature intended. If you're compelled to use a chemical cleaner to combat mold and scum on shower walls, for instance, make sure you have windows open while you work. Giving chemicals an aerosolized ride into your lungs isn't a good idea.

The Great Outdoors

Fertilizer foe It seems a little backward to play farmer and grow your own vegetables in your backyard, then shower them with a fertilizer that offers no benefit for body or earth. Instead, think natural and compost, Cole suggests. The food waste you throw in the garbage disposal or trash every day, like apple cores and banana skins, can be a nutrient-packed addition to your garden. Cole composts by putting aside his family's daily leftovers and tossing them outside in a pile. By churning the pile once a

eat, the more they reproduce, preventing future grub trouble and improving the health of your lawn without hurting your own.

Grass roots Once you have your grub problem under control, manicuring your lawn so it's green—and "green" with the environment in mind—isn't hard. You don't need heavy fertilizers, says Marshall. Instead, learn how to cut your grass right. Don't cut it too short but let the blades grow out 3 to 4 inches so the grass can establish a strong root system. Also, put the bagger aside. While you



week, he can be compost-ready in a few months. When summer arrives, the trash has become a treasure, ready for spreading like mulch over the garden to make both food and flowers fabulous.

Grubby control Looking for a lawn that's luscious and green? Among your fiercest foes are grubs that lunch on your lawn, creating brown and bare spots. Avoid toxic bug-killing chemicals and instead fight nature with nature. Spray microscopic worms called nematodes on your grass, says Marshall. The nematodes infest and kill grubs by eating them from the inside out (gross, yes, but effective). Even better, the more the nematodes

don't want to have big clumps of grass suffocating your lawn, a well-spread layer of fresh-cut grass acts as a natural fertilizer. Your neighbors will be jealous, and your lawn and your health will thank you.

Mosquito fix Spring and summer bring warmer weather, longer days...and pesky mosquitoes harboring dangerous diseases—or at least itchy bites. Skip the bug repellents, Marshall suggests, and concentrate on eliminating standing water around your home, such as kiddie pools, birdbaths, and rainwater buckets. Mosquitoes lay eggs and make a happy home in water. ■

CAR TALK

The average American spends about 25 minutes each day commuting to work, which means your wheels are probably as dirty as your house, if not more so. You sneeze in it, eat in it, and put your not-always-clean hands all over it, yet your car rarely gets a scrub-down. Environmental experts Jason Marshall, ScD, and Eugene Cole, DrPH, offer four tips for sanitizing your vehicle the healthy way:

No slacking Don't let your car get so gross that it's out of control. Stay on top of the leftover food you usually ignore in the backseat. Throw it out now to eliminate the need for heavy-duty cleaning chemicals later.

Outside help Don't clean your car in the garage, especially if it's small, confined space where things like gas and paint are stored. Park in your driveway, roll the windows down, and go to town.

Water works Don't give germs a free ride, literally. Clean your car at least once a month with soap and hot water or an all-natural cleaner like vinegar. When you're done, leave the windows open to air it out.



Suck it up Use a HEPA vacuum in your car, as well as your living room, especially if your ride is long overdue for a cleaning. Trapping car crud inside a HEPA-equipped vacuum is just as important as catching the stuff from your rugs.—HH

PREVIOUS PAGE: GAZIMA/GETTY IMAGES; TOP: ZENSHU/SHUTTERSTOCK; ARTPARTNER: IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

JUSTIN PLUMFREY/GETTY IMAGES



SEX

QUIZ

SEX LIFE ON PAUSE?

Some menopausal women enjoy a fulfilling sex life. Others have a big drop in libido. **"I am post-menopause by several years, now off HRT,"** says **texaswoman1** in WebMD's menopause community, **"and my main problem is very little desire."** What makes desire plummet this way? Some factors include:

Reduced hormone levels: When the ovaries produce fewer hormones, the effect can depress desire for sex in some women.

Sleep problems: The hot flashes, night sweats, and insomnia before and during menopause can leave a woman too exhausted to be interested in lovemaking.

Vaginal discomfort: Less estrogen thins the lining of the vagina and can make it dry and less lubricated during sex, creating discomfort for some women.

Health issues: Mood changes and bladder control problems can affect a woman's sex drive.

Stress: Job stress, being a caregiver for a loved one, relationship troubles, and sexuality issues with a woman's partner can sabotage libido.

Source: North American Menopausal Society (NAMS), National Institute on Aging, and the [WebMD Menopause Health Center](#)

DID YOU KNOW?

In the United States, the average age of menopause is 51.



QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

- 1 What is causing my loss of libido? How do you determine this?
- 2 What treatments can I try to ease my menopausal symptoms?
- 3 What other measures can I take? Are there lifestyle changes I can make?
- 4 Should my partner and I see a counselor or sex therapist?

SEX NEWSLETTER

Sign up for the latest news and lifestyle management tips—delivered directly to your email inbox! Go to [WebMD.com](#) and search for "newsletters."



[WebMD SEARCH](#)

DIET

QUIZ

IS YOUR KID OVERWEIGHT?

Is it baby fat or a real problem? Only your child's doctor can say for sure. But whether your child is slender or tipping the scales, what you say about food and weight can strongly influence her. **"My favorite thing is to reveal the 'super powers' that healthy foods give you,"** WebMD member **MalibuSkipper** tells the raising fit kids community. **"I tell [my daughter] how carrots help your eyesight, milk gives you bone strength, and beans give you protein to run fast."** He's got the right idea. Do you know other ways you can help your children develop healthy attitudes about food?

- 1 Do you encourage your child to eat slowly to detect hunger and fullness better?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- 2 Do you discourage eating in front of the TV, which can lead to overeating?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- 3 Do you reward your child with things other than food?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- 4 Do you plan fun forms of exercise, such as bike riding, dancing, or swimming?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Answer: If you answered yes to most of these questions, you're on the right track. Consult a doctor about whether your child is too heavy. Kids grow in unpredictable spurts, which makes unhealthy weight gain tricky to determine. For example, a boy may put on pounds first and catch up in height later. To assess your child, your doctor will measure height and weight and consider age and growth patterns. If your child's body mass index is greater than 85% of children of the same age and gender, he is considered overweight. Never put your child on a weight-loss diet unless your child's doctor prescribes it. By adopting healthier habits, most children's weight/height ratio will even out as they grow, especially when they go through puberty. Depriving children of healthy food to make them lose weight, on the other hand, may affect their ability to learn and grow.

Source: NIH, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the [WebMD Health & Parenting Center](#)

Orange
you Happy to
Erase MS

[ERASEMS.ORG](#)

and propel us one step closer to finding a cure for multiple sclerosis.

SHOP
ONLINE
TODAY

2012 PARTNERS

Alex and Ani, Charity by Design

Anastasia

Archipelago

The Bakery Boutique

Baking for Good

Bananagrams®

Belusso

Bing Bang Jewelry

Cherry Moon Farms

CJ Free

Deuce Brand

DKNY

Don Francisco's Coffee

Dry Divas

Eau de Nous

EFX Performance, Inc.

Farm Fresh to You

Gaiam

Harry & David

Invitation Consultants

Jewelry for a Cause

Kashwere

Kid Dangerous

Laura Geller

Lisa Hoffman Beauty

Luxe by Lisa Vogel

Mandarin Oriental, New York

Peace and Love Jewelry by

Nancy Davis

Personal Creations

Polar Bottle

Polar Products

Pro Flowers

P.S. Koveralls

Red Envelope

Ricardo Rojas

Scentsy

Shari's Berries

ShoeDazzle

Stella and Dot

Sweet E's

TxtRng

Vanity Mark Beauty

ZaZa Collection

The Nancy Davis Foundation for Multiple Sclerosis is a non profit organization dedicated to the treatment and ultimate cure of MS. Funding research is the core focus of the Foundation and all funds raised support our Center Without Walls program, a selected network of the nation's top MS research centers. 310-440-4842

RACE
ERASE
MS

CANCER

QUIZ

WHAT'S YOUR OVARIAN CANCER RISK?

Ovarian cancer kills more women than any other gynecologic cancer, largely because symptoms are so vague that the cancer is not detected until it's in a late stage. Warning signs include unexplained bloating, changes in bowel habits, and pelvic pain or pressure. Some women are at more risk than others. **"My mom and grandma and possibly my great grandma have had ovarian cancer," dickie78** tells WebMD's ovarian cancer community. **"I was wondering what my average risk of getting this is?"** A family history is just one risk factor for this disease. Do you know the others?

- 1 Do you use birth control pills?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- 2 Are you older than age 50?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- 3 Do you have a history of infertility?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- 4 Did you or do you breastfeed your children?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- 5 Did you begin menstruation before age 12, have no children, and/or go into menopause after age 50?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Answers: 1. Women who use birth control pills do not ovulate and therefore have a reduced risk of ovarian cancer. 2. Ovarian cancer can occur at any age but risk goes up as you age: most cases occur in women older than age 50. 3. Some studies show that infertility and/or the long-term use of medications that help you ovulate, such as clomiphene citrate, may increase the risk of ovarian cancer. 4. Having children reduces your risks of ovarian cancer. Studies show breastfeeding for one or more years decreases ovarian and breast cancer risk. 5. More menstrual cycles in a lifetime may be linked to higher ovarian cancer risk.

Source: Cleveland Clinic, National Cancer Institute, American Cancer Society, National Ovarian Cancer Coalition, MedlinePlus, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the [WebMD Ovarian Cancer Health Center](#)

DID YOU KNOW?

Roughly **1 in 70** women will get ovarian cancer in her lifetime.



QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

- 1 What are the symptoms of ovarian cancer? What should I keep an eye on?
- 2 If I have risk factors for ovarian cancer, should I use oral contraception?
- 3 Are there ways that I can reduce my risk? If so, what kinds of things should I do?
- 4 If I have risk factors, how frequently do I need to be checked?

CANCER NEWSLETTER

Sign up for the latest news and lifestyle management tips—delivered directly to your email inbox! Go to [WebMD.com](#) and search for “newsletters.”


 ovarian cancer

HEART

QUIZ

WOMEN'S HEART ATTACK SMARTS

worriedblue1980 tells WebMD's women's health community she's had three “attacks” where her heart beats fast, she can't breathe, and her left shoulder hurts. Sometimes she gets **“this weird stomach feeling, like a constant hunger pain...what could be going on?”** Only a doctor can say for sure, but for some women these could be heart attack symptoms. Learn more about how women's heart attacks differ from men's.

- 1 A woman in the midst of a heart attack will always have severe, unmistakable symptoms.
☐ True ☐ False
- 2 Women are less likely than men to have obvious heart attack symptoms, such as chest pain.
☐ True ☐ False
- 3 Women can start having symptoms a month or more before having a heart attack.
☐ True ☐ False
- 4 Men and women tend to be about the same age when have heart attacks.
☐ True ☐ False

Answers: 1. False. Thanks to the movies, a heart attack isn't complete without crushing chest pain. But many heart attacks, including women's, start with mild pain or discomfort. These sensations can be in the chest, as well as in one or both arms and in the back, neck, jaw, or stomach. Other possible symptoms include shortness of breath, a cold sweat, nausea, or feeling light-headed. 2. True—but not by much. Chest pain or discomfort is common in both women and men. Women are *somewhat* more likely than men to have other symptoms of a heart attack, such as shortness of breath, back or jaw pain, or nausea and vomiting. 3. True. A month or more before a heart attack, many women notice new or different symptoms, including unusual fatigue, sleep disturbance, shortness of breath, or indigestion. 4. False. Women are on average a decade older when they have a heart attack.

Source: NIH, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, American Heart Association, *Circulation*, and the [WebMD Heart Disease Health Center](#)

DID YOU KNOW?

Women have **more unrecognized heart attacks** than men do.



QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

- 1 What are my risk factors for heart disease and heart attack?
- 2 Are there steps I can take to reduce my risk? What are they?
- 3 What should I do if I have possible early warning symptoms, such as shortness of breath?
- 4 What steps should I take if I think I'm having a heart attack?

HEART HEALTH NEWSLETTER

Sign up for the latest news and lifestyle management tips—delivered directly to your email inbox! Go to [WebMD.com](#) and search for “newsletters.”


 women and heart attacks

ALLERGIES

QUIZ

ALLERGY TREATMENTS 101

Walk through any drug store aisle and you'll see dozens of "allergy relief" products. But **"what is the best allergy med to take?"** Trotez3686 asks WebMD's allergy community. **"I go through different types every year."** Check out our basic guide to learn more about the over-the-counter and prescription treatments available for seasonal allergies.

Antihistamines relieve sneezing, itching, and runny nose. They come in prescription form or over the counter, and some can make you drowsy. Antihistamines can be taken as pills, liquids, nasal sprays, or eye drops.

Decongestants relieve congestion and reduce nasal stuffiness by shrinking swollen membranes. Using decongestant nasal sprays for more than a few days can worsen symptoms with a "rebound" reaction, but it's OK to take decongestant pills for a longer period. However, these pills can raise blood pressure, so people with high blood pressure (hypertension) should take them with care.

Nasal corticosteroid sprays reduce inflammation that causes nasal congestion and other nasal allergy symptoms.

Leukotriene inhibitors are prescription medicines that relieve the symptoms of seasonal allergies. They also help control asthma.

Allergy shots, also called immunotherapy, work by increasing your tolerance to the substance you're allergic to.

Source: NIH, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, and the [WebMD Allergies Health Center](#)

DID YOU KNOW?

17.7 million adults in the United States have hay fever.



QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

- 1 What is causing my allergies? How did you determine the cause?
- 2 What is the best type of allergy treatment for me? How long will I need treatment?
- 3 What are some drug side effects I should watch out for?
- 4 How can I limit my exposure to allergy triggers?

ALLERGIES NEWSLETTER

Sign up for the latest news and lifestyle management tips—delivered directly to your email inbox! Go to [WebMD.com](#) and search for "newsletters."

[WebMD SEARCH](#)

MIND

QUIZ

DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE ADHD?

Most children fidget, daydream, and bounce off the walls from time to time. But some do it more. **"My son is 6 and in first grade,"** mom2therescue writes in the WebMD parenting community. **"He is very impulsive and doesn't focus the way everyone else thinks he should."** The boy's grades aren't affected, this mother writes, but his behavior disrupts the class. These are classic symptoms of ADHD. Do you know the others?

- Fidgeting, squirming, or moving legs, feet, arms, hands, and fingers frequently
- Walking, running, or climbing when he or she is expected to remain seated
- Having difficulty taking turns or waiting in line
- Not finishing things
- Becoming bored after only a short time
- Daydreaming or giving the impression of being in another world
- Talking when others are talking or blurting out answers before questions are finished
- Getting frustrated with schoolwork or homework; disliking things that require sustained mental effort
- Acting quickly without thinking first
- Getting easily distracted or seeming forgetful

These behaviors are more frequent and severe in children with ADHD, compared with their peers. If you checked several items, ask your child's doctor about ADHD. The disorder's hallmarks: inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

Source: The [WebMD ADD and ADHD Health Center](#)

[WebMD SEARCH](#)

Cold? Flu?

Don't guess—
get the facts.

[WebMD Cold vs. Flu Slideshow](#)

[Watch Now](#)

[WebMD](#)

©2011 WebMD, LLC. All rights reserved.

DIABETES

QUIZ

IS YOUR DIABETES IN CONTROL?

If you have diabetes, “tight control”—monitoring and managing your blood sugar levels to prevent the disease from getting worse—is crucial. It’s not always easy. **“It sounds like you are not feeling well and, based on the information you’ve received, you’ve realized it’s time for change,”** WebMD member **jambajuice** recently told a member in the WebMD diabetes community. **“Congratulations on the hard work you’ve done to this point...the only thing left is to take the last step: Get control.”** Have you taken that step? Take our quiz.

- 1 I follow my diabetes food plan:
 - ☐ Every day
 - ☐ Most days
 - ☐ What food plan?
- 2 I check my feet for cuts and sores:
 - ☐ Daily
 - ☐ Sometimes
 - ☐ When my doctor reminds me
- 3 I exercise:
 - ☐ Regularly, checking my blood sugar before and after
 - ☐ I prefer spectator sports
- 4 I check my blood sugar levels:
 - ☐ Per my doctor’s instructions
 - ☐ When I feel like it
 - ☐ I rarely remember

Answers: 1. Follow your diabetes food plan. If you don’t have one, ask your doctor about seeing a dietitian/nutritionist who specializes in diabetes. 2. Check your feet every day and maintain proper foot care, including nails and skin. Check for cuts, blisters, red spots, and swelling. 3. Get 30 to 60 minutes of activity on most days of the week. Before changing your level of routine physical activity, check with your doctor. 4. Check your blood glucose the way your doctor tells you to. High blood sugar can make you feel thirsty and tired, cause blurry vision, or make you urinate often. Low blood sugar can make you feel weak, tired, confused, or shaky.

Source: American National Diabetes Education Program and the WebMD Diabetes Health Center

DID YOU KNOW?

Blood glucose levels should be between **70** and **130** before meals (readings taken from monitors that read whole blood).



QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

- 1 What kinds of dietary and fitness changes do I need to make?
- 2 What other doctors and medical professionals should I see? How often?
- 3 Will I need to inject insulin or take medications? If so, how often?
- 4 How do I avoid complications? What kinds of things do I need to be aware of?

DIABETES NEWSLETTER

Sign up for the latest news and lifestyle management tips—delivered directly to your email inbox! Go to **WebMD.com** and search for “newsletters.”


 diabetes control

SLEEP

QUIZ

DO YOU HAVE A SLEEP DISORDER?

bigj1624, a WebMD sleep disorder community member, is short on sleep. **“For about the last two years I sleep no more than 6 hours a night,”** bigj writes. **“Lately it’s been about 4 to 5 hours. I’m tired all day long no matter what. Can someone please give me some insight into what might be going on?”** bigj could have a sleep disorder. If so, it shouldn’t be taken lightly. Could you have one, too?

- 1 Do you have trouble going to sleep or staying asleep?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
- 2 Do you snore loudly and/or heavily?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
- 3 Are you excessively sleepy or do you lack energy in the daytime?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
- 4 Do you have trouble with concentration or memory loss?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
- 5 Do you fall asleep while driving, in meetings, while reading a book, or while watching television?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No

Answers: If you answered yes to any of the above questions, you may have insomnia or another type of sleep disorder. Talk to your doctor or consult a sleep specialist.

Source: The WebMD Sleep Disorders Health Center

DID YOU KNOW?

During middle age, sleep patterns alter: **We wake up more** than in our younger years.



QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

- 1 Do my sleep problems indicate I may have a sleep disorder? Is so, what type?
- 2 Are my sleep problems caused by an underlying medical or mental illness?
- 3 Will a sleep medication help? Are prescription sleep medications habit-forming?
- 4 Should I see a sleep specialist? Will I need to undergo overnight testing?

SLEEP WELL NEWSLETTER

Sign up for the latest news and lifestyle management tips—delivered directly to your email inbox! Go to **WebMD.com** and search for “newsletters.”


 sleep disorders

PAIN

QUIZ

THE ABCs OF BACKACHE CARE

More than 70% of Americans have low back pain at some point. Discomfort ranges from mild aches to jaw-gritting spasms. And many aren't sure what to do when it hits. **"Today I was doing some yard work and leaned way over to fix something," An_239553** says in WebMD's back pain community. **"After about 15–20 minutes of strenuously working, someone called my name, and I shot up to answer, at which point I felt an instant pain in my back."** That pain was followed, later, by severe back pain. Would you know what to do?

- 1 To avoid further injury, be sure to call a doctor right away if your back is in pain.

☒ Yes
 ☐ No
- 2 Plenty of bed rest and relaxation is the best cure.

☐ Yes
 ☒ No
- 3 Heat or cold can help some people with low back pain.

☐ Yes
 ☒ No
- 4 Surgery can help all types of back pain.

☐ Yes
 ☒ No

Answers: 1. Yes, but only in certain circumstances. Try self-care for a couple of days if pain is persistent but mild. But don't hesitate to call your doctor if pain is severe or if you have a fever. Call 911 if you have back pain with chest pain or if you fell or suffered a severe blow, are vomiting, or have weakness, tingling, or numbness in your legs. 2. No. Don't stay in bed more than a couple of days. Getting up and moving about will speed your recovery. 3. Yes. Heat from a hot pack or other source can be applied in 15- to 20-minute intervals. Cold from an ice pack or other source can be applied for 10 to 15 minutes; repeat every two hours as needed for the first 48 hours. Some people find alternating heat and cold treatments works well. 4. No. Surgery usually helps only certain types of back pain, such as that caused by a pinched nerve or a compressed spinal cord.

Source: American Association of Neurological Surgeons and the WebMD Back Pain Health Center

DID YOU KNOW?

Lower back pain is often triggered by some combination of overuse, muscle strain, or injury to the muscles and ligaments that support the spine.



QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

- 1 What can I do to prevent my back pain from getting worse?
- 2 Why is my back vulnerable to pain and injury? Is there anything I can do to prevent it?
- 3 What are my treatment options? Will I need medication or surgery?
- 4 If you advise surgery, what are the risks? How long does it generally take to recover?

CHRONIC PAIN NEWSLETTER

Sign up for the latest news and lifestyle management tips—delivered directly to your email inbox! Go to WebMD.com and search for “newsletters.”



WebMD **checkup** 10 QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR LIFE AND WELL-BEING



Avril Lavigne

[MUSICIAN]

disease that I really wanted to get on board and help out any way I could.

What do you wish more people knew about MS?

MS is a disease that affects the whole family, not just a person. It affects twice as many women as men and there is no cure. Also, it is not contagious! MS is a random disease, but there is some research that shows there is a higher risk in some families.

You've been touring and working hard to support your latest album, *Goodbye Lullaby*. How do you stay in shape when you're on the road?

I stay active by Rollerblading, skateboarding, surfing, snowboarding—not really working out but a great way to stay in shape and have fun.

What's your best health habit? Your worst?

I like to cook vegan. Pizza is my worst.

Do you have a personal health philosophy?

I enjoy life but in moderation. I would never criticize someone else's health choices, but I choose to live as healthy as possible.

Do you cook or order in most nights?

I love to cook, whether at home making Italian or creative salads or on the road making dinner for the band. I recently made pea soup on tour using my crockpot!

What inspires your songwriting?

Inspiration for songs can come in many forms, either something I am personally experiencing or something those closest to me are going through. I write songs all the time and don't really have a pattern of timing. Just when the moment hits me.

Are you a morning person or a night person?

Like most musicians, I am very much a night person. Especially when I am on the road, after a show, I tend to be up for hours, just amped by the crowd.

What music do you listen to when you work out? Can you give us a sneak peek at your playlist?

I tend to listen to a wide variety of music, depending on the mood. Sometimes I like jazz. Other times it's Coldplay or Sinatra. I listen to a lot of Rat Pack music.—Kim Caviness

March is Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month, and your Avril Lavigne Foundation has partnered with the Race to Erase MS, the annual fundraising gala hosted by the Nancy Davis Foundation for Multiple Sclerosis (erasems.org). What are you doing this month to help make a difference for people who have this chronic autoimmune condition that affects the central nervous system?

Helping to raise awareness about MS and continuing the conversation to educate people about this disease are what is most important.

What inspired you to get involved? Do you have a personal connection to MS?

Meeting Nancy Davis and hearing her story is what got me involved. I was so moved by her determination after she was diagnosed with MS in 1993 to help find a cure for this

ETHAN MILLER/WIREIMAGE

Read [Avril Lavigne's](#) full interview. WebMD.com

The HEALTHY DOG AND CAT GUIDE Created for Your Vet's Office

WebMD Pets

webmd.com

Spring 2012

FAT CAT

How to help
kitty slim down

64

TAKE THE LEAD

Leash training
your pooch

65

Denise Richards
homes in on
rescuing dogs

62

HOUNDS OF LOVE



Download
WebMD
the Magazine
for iPad!

Jennifer Lopez talks
to WebMD about
her newest
starring role!



Special Flip Issue!

I'LL TAKE MY
WIFE'S POLE
DANCING CLASS

IF

SHE TURNS DOWN
THE THERMOSTAT
BELOW 76°

What are you willing to do to save the planet? Create your challenge
at youtube.com/EarthHour. **DARE THE WORLD. SAVE THE PLANET.**

©2012 World Wildlife Fund, Inc. All rights reserved.



MARCH 31 8:30 PM

ask the experts

▶ YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Press Paws

Scratching the surface of the declawing-cats debate

Q ▶ My spouse and I disagree about having our cat declawed. What's your advice?

A ▶ Declawing cats is a controversial topic. Some people feel it's unnatural to remove a cat's claws since it's often done for the owner's benefit, not the cat's. But I believe it really boils down to this: Cats are born with claws, and they should keep them.

That said, there are a couple of reasons to declaw. Medically, you sometimes have to remove a claw if it's badly damaged or has a tumor. And sometimes cats are declawed to prevent trauma to their owners. Some people whose immune systems are suppressed shouldn't be exposed to the bacteria on a cat's claws, and people who are on blood thinners should avoid being scratched. Most declawings, however, happen because cats are being destructive.

There are alternatives to declawing, and I think everyone, including veterinarians, views declawing as a last resort. But if it keeps the owners from giving up their cats, euthanizing them, or making them live outside, I think it's a realistic option.

If the issue is scratching, there are effective solutions. One is training, especially for kittens, on a scratching post. You can also try vinyl nail caps (one brand is Soft Paws), which are put on with surgical adhesive. Cats usually get used to them within a day or two, but the glue has to be applied properly.

Trimming nails, if you do it weekly, can help if the problem is scratching people, but it won't stop a cat from damaging furniture. Cats scratch to stretch and to sharpen their claws. So if you cut their claws, they just want to sharpen them more. Try a scratching post.

Q ▶ I have a new puppy and a new kitten, and I'm overwhelmed. What do I need to know to give them a healthy start?

A ▶ New pets can be wonderful and confusing at the same time, so let's boil it down to vets' five top tips.

Schedule regular exams. Just like you, your pet can get heart problems, develop arthritis, or have a toothache. Make sure your annual vet visits touch on nutrition and weight control and include vaccinations, parasite control, and a dental exam as well as health screenings.

Spay or neuter your pets. Some 8 million to 10 million pets end up in U.S. shelters every year, so it's vital to spay or neuter your dog or cat. Ask your vet what age is appropriate for your puppy or kitten.

Prevent parasites. Fleas are the most common external parasite that plagues pets and can lead to irritated skin, hair loss, and infection. They can also introduce other parasites to your cat or dog: By swallowing just one flea, your pet can end up with tapeworms, the most common internal parasite in dogs and cats.

Maintain a healthy weight. Many dogs and cats are overweight or obese. And like in people, obesity in pets brings health risks that include diabetes, arthritis, and cancer. Talk to your vet, who can make feeding suggestions based on your pet's age, weight, and lifestyle.

Provide an enriched environment. Pets need mental stimulation, which may mean daily walks for your pooch and scratching posts, window perches, and toys for your cat. And it means playtime with you, which not only keeps boredom at bay and helps tone their muscles, but also strengthens your bond with your pet.



TOP: U TURN STUDIOS/VEER; DIGITAL VISION/GETTY IMAGES



Drew Weigner, DVM, ABVP
WebMD PET HEALTH EXPERT



Audrey Cook, BVM&S
WebMD PET HEALTH EXPERT

Get expert answers to your pet questions.



WebMD.com

Dog House

When it comes to fostering canines, actor **Denise Richards** has an open-door policy

By Melanie D.G. Kaplan, WebMD Contributing Writer

Denise Richards talks openly about her dogs. She'll tell you about their accommodations (not too shabby), the music they listen to (classical), and what she cooks when they're sick (pumpkin with rice and chicken). But ask her exactly how many live under her roof, and you'll discover the extent of her canine obsession.

"The number varies, because I'm often fostering," Richards says, side-stepping the question. "Let's just say: I built a dog room at my house."

The 40-year-old actor and former model, who played a "Bond girl" opposite Pierce Brosnan in *The World Is Not Enough* and appeared in the hit sitcom *Seinfeld*, her own E! reality show, and, more recently, NBC's *30 Rock*, is the real deal when it comes to dog rescue. She not only pulls pups out of line for euthanasia at her local shelter in Los Angeles, but she also houses them in a space so cushy it would make most mutts—and even a few humans—green with envy. In fact, the number of dogs in Richards' home is irrelevant. From her point of view, the more, the better.

"When I gutted and remodeled my house, I had the garage converted to a dog bedroom," Richards says. "It has stalls and beautiful bronzy, caramel-colored wallpaper that I wanted for my house. But then I didn't have a room for it, so the dogs got it. Everyone who sees my dog room wants to come back as one of my dogs."

From the time she was little, Richards has had a soft spot for homeless dogs. On family camping trips, when she came across strays, she lobbied her parents to bring them home. She didn't win those battles, but the dogs they did adopt were rescues. "The last one was a schnauzer that had been abused," she remembers. "It was blind in one eye. I loved that my mom didn't care what the dog looked liked. It didn't have to be the prettiest dog."

Much of Richards' connection to animals comes from her mother (who died from kidney cancer in 2007). And Richards sees the same unconditional animal love in her daughters Sami, 8, and Lola, 6. (Their dad is Richards' ex, actor Charlie Sheen. Richards also adopted a baby girl, Eloise, last year.) The girls take after Richards, attracted to animals that require extra

attention. "They gravitate to the ones that are hurt or sick or look different," she says.

Richards has volunteered at shelters over the years and today is active with Best Friends Animal Society's Pup My Ride program (bestfriends.org). The organization, which has a sanctuary in Utah, organizes dog transport from shelters and puppy mills to areas where the dogs are most likely to find homes. "So far they've saved thousands of dogs," Richards says. "But it's so heartbreaking, because you see all the dogs that can't go on the ride—the ones that are too old or sick. I've taken a lot of those home."

One is Josie, a 17-year-old mutt Richards adopted in 2010. "I just couldn't imagine her ending her days at a shelter," she says. Another is Princess, a shih tzu with cancer who had nearly starved to death. These two, along with her longtime pet, Hank, a French bulldog, are part of the current pack.

Richards devotes a section of her website to animals, where she posts photos of dogs available for adoption. She says even if someone is looking for a puppy rather

than an older dog, a shelter is the way to go since they have dogs of every size, shape, color, and age. Richards praises pet stores such as Fresh Paws of Bel Air and Pet Rush, both in Los Angeles, with dogs from shelters instead of puppy mills.

"It's great, because shelters can be intimidating, and a lot of people going there don't have a vision of what a dog can look like," she says. "I've brought home some dogs where just a wash and haircut made such a difference."

Richards has a vision for dogs—her own, plus those she has yet to save: "A farm with a rescue sanctuary," she says confidently. "I would love to have that one day." ■

Reviewed by
William Draper, DVM
WebMD PET
HEALTH EXPERT



Richards is active with Best Friends Animal Society's Pup My Ride program, which transports dogs to areas where they can find good homes.

COVER AND LEFT: KHAREN HILL/CORBIS OUTLINE; ALBERT MICHAEL/STARTRAKSPHOTO.COM

Bringing home a rescue pet? Get [transition tips](#).  [WebMD.com](#)



Heavy Duty

Is your cat overweight?
Help Kitty slim down and live longer

By Julie Edgar, WebMD Contributing Writer

Bea Sacks of Huntington Woods, Mich., calls Jack, her adult cat, “big.” But she has no idea whether he’s too heavy. That’s because Jack, like many cats, eats whenever he wants and rarely visits the vet. Unfortunately, if Jack is even a pound over his ideal weight, he could be in trouble. Overweight cats are far more likely to develop osteoarthritis, type 2 diabetes, respiratory problems, and some skin conditions.

Hear a thud when your cat jumps off the couch? It’s time for diet and exercise. Before you start any routine, be sure to see a veterinarian first. She can rule out other health issues and help devise a sensible weight-loss and exercise plan. What the vet can’t do is restrain your urge to reward your cat with treats. Keep in mind: A slimmer, fitter cat is a happier, longer-living cat.

What’s a healthy weight? An average domestic shorthair should weigh between 8 and 10 pounds. To determine if your cat is within range, put him on a scale or gently squeeze the sides of his rib cage. If you can easily feel the ribs, he’s probably not overweight. If you have to press to get at the ribs, he may be too heavy. Also, look at your cat’s waistline. His body should become more slender from the belly to hindquarters. A swinging pouch between your cat’s hind legs can indicate he is overweight.

As for dinner time, Joseph Wakshlag, DVM, PhD, DACVN, assistant professor of clinical nutrition at Cornell University’s College of Veterinary Medicine, recommends checking the calorie count on cat food product labels. “The bottom line is you have to replace fat with protein and carbohydrates,” he says. Also scan the label to make sure your cat is getting the right nutrients for his stage in life and that the top ingredients are meat, meat byproducts, or seafood. Nutrients such as taurine and

B vitamins are also good. Remember, cats are natural carnivores, so vegetarian diets won’t do.

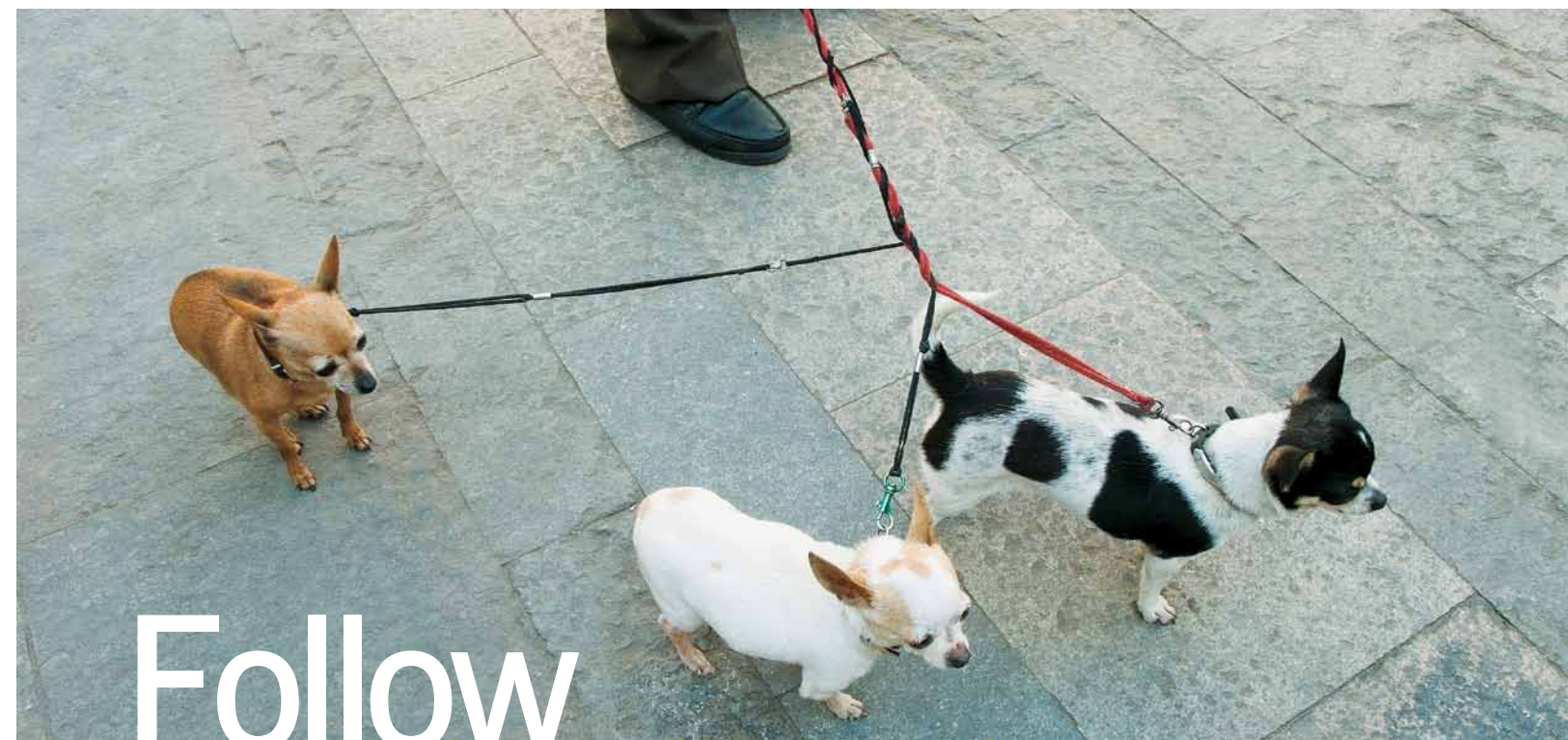
Now, get your cat moving—a challenge if he doesn’t venture outdoors. Try a laser pointer, which emits a pinpoint of light that intrigues cats and often gets them off the couch. Other interactive toys, like sticks with feathers at the end, are good, too. Climbing structures and scratching posts are excellent choices and may also interest your cat. So will empty boxes. Start activity habits early, if possible—ideally, when your cat is still a kitten. ●

GARY S. CHAPMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Weight Watch

A 10-pound indoor cat should take in about 200 calories a day, according to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention. Some slim-down tips:

- Set a weight loss goal with your veterinarian. (A loss of about 1 pound per month is healthy.)
- Divide the targeted calorie intake into four to six small meals.
- Leave out cat food for a limited amount of time.



Follow the Lead

Leash-training can be tough,
but it’s good for you and your dog

By Katherine Kam, WebMD Contributing Writer

Just try walking an excitable, untrained dog on the bustling sidewalks of Manhattan. When Andrew Kudysch first took Lexus, the golden retriever he rescued from a shelter, on city walks, “she was a puller and a jumper; she did not walk well on a leash,” he says. “I didn’t know what to do.”

Of course, Lexus was just being a dog—most will pull naturally. But with proper training, head halters, or no-pull harnesses, most dogs can trot along without turning their owners into a frazzled mess.

In the beginning, that requires lots of hard work, patience, and consistency, says Kristen Collins, MS, CPDT, an animal behaviorist with the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Collins favors a training method called “penalty yards.” “If the dog pulls, the second the leash is taut, I’m going to back up three

feet and stop,” she explains. Don’t permit the dog to walk forward again until the leash becomes loose, she says.

Head halters can help with training, too, says Bonnie V. Beaver, DVM, professor of veterinary medicine at Texas A&M University and an animal behavior expert. They’re gentler than choke or prong collars. The halter, which differs from a muzzle, slips over a dog’s snout and works much like a harness on a horse. If the dog pulls, the halter will turn its head down and sideways. “If the head can’t go, the body can’t go,” Beaver says.

When a dog isn’t pulling, reinforce that good behavior with treats, Collins says. The dog learns that “not only do I get to go forward, I get the occasional food reward, too.” However, dole out goodies at random intervals only after your dog has been walking at your side for at least 15 to 30 seconds, she says. Whipping out a treat as soon as the leash slackens might give your pooch the wrong idea, Collins says.

And “don’t forget the praise,” Beaver says. “[You should] ‘happy talk’ to your dog so that he knows he’s doing the right thing.”

As Kudysch devoted more time to training, he found Lexus became even more companionable, he says. “I could let her off-leash, and she would stay right at my side and never let me out of her sight. She was very obedient.”

After Lexus died, Kudysch brought home two new Cavalier King Charles Spaniel puppies. Now 6 months old, the duo are already getting used to being on leash. “A well-trained dog is going to make the owner happy, which is going to make everybody happy,” he says. ●

JOSEFO SORIANO/GETTY IMAGES

Get more **pet training** tips.  **WebMD.com**