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.

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**Parenting**

**Modern Mom**

After long days shooting TV’s top comedy, Modern Family, **Julie Bowen** goes home to a family including three kids under age 3. How does this self-confessed control freak balance it all? With lots of help and a good sense of humor, Bowen tells WebMD contributing writer **Lauren Paige Kennedy**. The award-winning actor reveals her tips for managing motherhood and a career—and making it fun every step of the way.

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**Wellness**

**Green Zone**

From your living space and yard to the air you breathe, going green can boost your family’s overall health. WebMD contributing writer **Heather Hatfield** offers easy eco-savvy strategies to make over your home inside and out. AND: Clean-and-green expert product picks.

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**Seasonal Allergies**

Do you greet the warm weather with a stuffy nose and watery eyes instead of a happy heart? WebMD contributing writer **Gina Shaw** asks medical experts for five ways to cope with seasonal allergies’ peskiest symptoms.

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**WebMD Pets**

**Animal Instincts**

Actor and model **Isabella Rossellini** on her new TV pet project and why she trains seeing-eye dogs.

**WebMD Baby**

**Plus One**

Math whiz and *Wonder Years* star **Danica McKellar** adds a new role to her impressive résumé: mom.

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*American Journal of Preventive Medicine, August 2008*
March/April 2011

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March/April 2011

Nan’s Note

What’s for Good this spring.
PLUS: Take our Healthy Start Challenge and win a prize!

WebMD Wire

Get the scoop on black rice’s benefits, OTC medicine dosing guidelines, and the dirtiest U.S. cities.

Click Here

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Smart Start

Chef Domenica’s healthy breakfast tips and her own recipe for Guiltless French Toast.

WebMD Checkup

Rap artist Nelly talks about the importance of bone marrow donation and his personal ties to the cause, how he stays fit, and what being a dad has taught him about life.

WebMD Checkup

Rap artist Nelly talks about the importance of bone marrow donation and his personal ties to the cause, how he stays fit, and what being a dad has taught him about life.

Everyone wanted to know how the Princess was...
And CaringBridge made it easy to share.

CaringBridge provides free websites that connect people facing a significant health challenge to family and friends, making it easy to share updates and receive support.

NAME: Taylor
HEALTH CONDITION: Cancer
VISITS TO WEBSITE: 632,130
MESSAGES OF SUPPORT: 12,211

CaringBridge.org
Making each health journey easier.
“Mom, I need to write a paragraph answering the question: Is there a basic human need for justice, equality, and freedom?” my daughter announced. “Oh, and I need to give examples of each.”

This request came from our 7th grader while my husband and I were watching the events in Egypt unfold on television last month. My mind raced through my grade-school memory (oh, boy):

“...and equality, and freedom?” my daughter announced. “Oh, and I need to give examples of each.”

And that’s just the start—there’s much more to come for our Teen Health Center.

That would be our new Teen Health Center at WebMD.com. And that’s just the start—there’s much more to come for our kids. We’ll let you know all about it on WebMD.com.

And if you have an iPhone, be sure to download WebMD the App— it’s as easy as scanning this QR code at right with your iPhone. You can use your phone to access games, news, and sports—and to do the right thing for your body, too. (But do not, not, not take your iPhone to bed with you!)

“OK, little one, here’s the deal.” I laid it out: “The one thing we can all agree on is that the right to life, the right to liberty and the right to pursuit of happiness are basic human needs. And that’s just the start—there’s much more to come for our Teen Health Center.”

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healthy start Good for you this month

SPRING’s Quick Picks

IS YOUR DIY BEAUTY TREATMENT A WINNER?
When I’m feeling crafty, I make my own body scrub—brown sugar, grapeseed oil, and vanilla extract. Do you have a favorite do-it-yourself beauty recipe? Take our Healthy Start Challenge: Share your recipe in the magazine community at WebMD.com for a chance to win a $20 Whole Foods gift card!

Andi Gabrick
Senior Editor, WebMD the Magazine

PENNYWISE PAMPERING
In desperate need of a facial but don’t have the time or the extra cash? Behold the power of the papaya, says WebMD skin care expert Susan Evans, MD. “It’s a great skin fruit,” she says. It contains vitamins A, C, and E, which help prevent signs of aging, and the papain enzyme acts as a natural exfoliant. To put it to work for you, blend together a cut-up, seedless papaya with a whole egg, and apply as a 10-minute mask. “You’ll see improvement in your skin’s texture and tightness, and you’ll have that fine glow,” Evans says.

DOZE PATROL
Stifling yawns at your desk? Beat the afternoon slump with these tips from WebMD nutrition expert Carolyn O’Neil, MS, RD. First, drink up. “Being dehydrated is one of the top causes of lethargy and lack of focus,” O’Neil says. Next, “check your snack scorecard,” she says. All-day snackers tend to skip meals, which can zap energy. So make sure your snacks are healthy and filling. “Snacks should be about 150 calories, and high in fiber and protein,” O’Neil says.

CHORE JOY
Cleaning the floors does more than make over the kitchen—it can help make over your body. “You can easily burn 150 calories an hour just doing those chores that torture you,” says WebMD fitness expert Pamela Peke, MD. Pick up the pace by throwing on some tunes and dancing while mopping to burn up to 200 calories an hour. “Always have some energy-pumping music on in the background,” Peke says.

FORE GOOD
Work on your swing and help those in need. March is National Kidney Month, a perfect time to sign up for one of 40 National Kidney Foundation Cadillac Golf Classic tournaments held across the country this year. One tournament takes place in Lakeland, Fla., in mid-April. For a full list, go to kidney.org.

healthy eats spring’11’s Quick picks

FIT TIP
Give back

The destination that helps you and your family achieve the fit lifestyle including:

• FOOD: Nutritional Fitness
• MOVE: Physical Fitness
• MOOD: Emotional Fitness
• RECHARGE: Behavioral Fitness

Learning and living a healthy lifestyle is a family affair. fit is designed with that in mind with worksheets, videos, and games customized for different ages. There’s also a section just for parents.

Fit: The Place for KIDS to Play & Learn About Healthy Habits

WebMD and Sanford Health proudly announce
**Double Duty**

You know the old saying that "two heads are better than one"? It's true, new research finds, but only if both heads contain the same skill sets.

In a study of shared decision-making, researchers from University College London showed that two people of equal abilities solved problems better when they worked together, probably because individuals tend to lose focus over time.

But when a competent person was paired with someone who wasn't so competent, group and individual performance suffered. In those cases, the researchers say, people are probably better off working alone.

The findings suggest people can work together most effectively when they understand their individual competence levels.

But given that many people aren't that self-aware, the onus may be on business managers to evaluate employees' abilities and match them accordingly.

Source: Science

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**Fake Bake**

Although the trend toward sunless tanning (think sprays and lotions) is becoming increasingly popular, new research shows that people who use those products are also more likely to go to indoor tanning salons—which expose them to cancer-causing UV rays.

Researchers at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis analyzed the records of more than 2,800 people ages 18 to 64. They found that women are three times more likely than men to use indoor tanning facilities and that both men and women who use spray tanning products were more likely to visit tanning salons. The study also showed that only 13.3% of the women and 4.2% of the men knew that avoid-who use spray tanning products were more likely to visit tanning salons. The study more likely than men to use indoor tanning facilities and that both men and women

Source: Archives of Dermatology

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**RICE REDUX**

For years, brown rice has been the rice of choice for people seeking a healthy alternative to processed grains. Now, studies show black rice is also extremely healthy because it contains antioxidants similar to those found in blackberries and blueberries. In fact, it may be even healthier than brown rice.

"Just a spoonful of black rice bran contains more health-promoting anthocyanin antioxidants than... a spoonful of blueberries, but with less sugar and more fiber and vitamin E antioxidants," says Zhimin Xu, PhD of Louisiana State University Agricultural Center.

"If berries are used to boost health, why not black rice and black rice bran?" Anthocyanin antioxidants promise for fighting cancer, heart disease, and other health problems, Xu says. He adds that food manufacturers could use black rice bran or bran extracts to boost the health value of breakfast cereals, beverages, cakes, cookies, and other foods.

Currently, black rice is used mainly in Asia for food decoration, noodles, sushi, and puddings.

Source: American Chemical Society Fall 2010 National Meeting

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**Dare to Dream?**

It’s normal to daydream. In general, people spend almost half their waking hours thinking about something other than what they are doing in the present. But this kind of mind wandering typically gives rise to unhappiness, according to new research.

Researchers used a new type of iPhone app to gather data about the thoughts, feelings, and actions of 2,250 volunteers at random intervals during the day. On average, the participants reported their minds were wandering 64.9% of the time. In fact, the only time their minds wandered less than 30% of the time was during sex, during which their minds wandered only 11% of the time. The researchers found that people in the study were least happy when resting, working, or using a home computer.

So what’s the best predictor of happiness? How often our minds leave the present, not the activities we’re doing. These research findings mirror the teachings of many religious and philosophical traditions that preach happiness can be found through mindfulness and by living in the moment.

Source: Science

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**Some Things In Life You Can’t Control.**

The risk of infection during cancer treatment can be very high. And infections can delay your treatment or stop it altogether. So do everything you can to get healthy, stay healthy, stay strong. Talk to your doctor and go to manageyourtreatment.com right now. Some things you can’t control. But this, you can.
There are many reasons to keep your cholesterol in check, and here’s one more: New research indicates that higher levels of HDL—the “good” cholesterol—may reduce your risk of getting Alzheimer’s disease.

Researchers at Columbia University monitored 1,110 seniors for four years. None had memory trouble or dementia at the start of the study. But by the end of the study, those people with the highest HDL counts (over 55 mg/dL) were 60% less likely to develop Alzheimer’s than those whose HDL level was under 39 mg/dL. (However, high levels of “bad” LDL and total cholesterol did not appear to be linked to a reduced risk of developing the disease.)

Although the researchers aren’t sure exactly how HDL protects the brain against Alzheimer’s, they hypothesize that HDL reduces the risk of stroke, which in turn is associated with the disease.

Not all studies have led to the same conclusion. A 2001 study found that Japanese-American men with higher HDL levels were more likely to develop Alzheimer’s-related plaques and tangles in their brains. Yet plenty of studies have shown that higher levels of HDL protect the heart. So it’s smart to try to boost HDL levels above 60 mg/dL, doctors familiar with the new research say.

According to the Harvard University School of Medicine, good ways to boost HDL cholesterol include getting regular aerobic exercise, losing weight (if needed), quitting smoking, avoiding trans fats and highly refined carbohydrates (such as white flour), and taking certain kinds of medication.

16 Americans’ life satisfaction rank, compared to people in 132 countries. Denmark ranked No. 1.

There is no evidence that seat belts increase the risk of cancer. On the contrary, many experts believe that the use of seat belts can actually help to reduce the risk of cancer.

Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh examined data on 299 dementia-free people with a mean age of 78 who recorded the number of blocks they walked weekly. Nine years later, the research team took brain scans to measure brain size. Four years after that, the team tested for cognitive impairments or dementia.

The researchers discovered that those who walked at least six miles a week had more gray matter volume in their brains nine years after the start of the study than people who didn’t walk as much. Thirteen years after the study began, the walkers had cut their risk of developing memory loss in half.

Earlier research found that moderate exercise can enhance the connectivity of important brain circuits, which in turn combats age-related performance on cognitive tests.

Walk This Way
Forget about boot camp: Your brain was made for walking. Walking is a great way to help clear your head—and ward off dementia, according to new research that finds that walking seems to help prevent brain shrinkage, which can cause memory loss.

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Earlier research found that moderate exercise can enhance the connectivity of important brain circuits, which in turn combats age-related performance on cognitive tests.
DOsing Dilemma

Ever been boggled by the dosing instructions printed on over-the-counter med for kids? It’s not you.

When researchers at Atlanta’s Emory University School of Medicine recently examined the packaging of 200 of the best-selling kid-strength liquid medications (including cough and cold, allergy, pain, and gastrointestinal remedies), they discovered a slew of confusing elements. One-fourth of the medicines didn’t come with a dosing device (such as a cup, dropper, or syringe), for instance. In 99% of those that did, the markings on the device were inconsistent with the label instructions; 88% of the dosing devices included extra markings that had nothing to do with the recommended doses. And more than half of the medicines’ directions didn’t use standard abbreviations for measurements such as milliliter or teaspoon.

These findings are important because more than half of U.S. children take at least one medication per week. More than half of those are OTC drugs.

Source: CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics

Medical Mistakes

To err is human. Even for doctors. A new study finds that, despite recent preventive measures, serious medical mistakes continue to occur in the United States.

In the study, researchers examined data collected by an insurance company that provided liability coverage to 6,000 doctors. They found that between 2002 and 2008, doctors performed the wrong procedures on 25 patients and performed a procedure on the wrong part of a patient’s body in 107 cases. As a result, one person died and several others suffered complications. The main factors in wrong-patient medical mistakes were errors in diagnosis (56%) and errors in communication (180%). Errors in judgment contributed to 85% of wrong-site medical errors, and lack of verification before starting the surgical procedure was cited as the cause in 72% of these mistakes.

The study authors are calling for stricter adherence to the Universal Protocol, which was introduced in 2004 by the Joint Commission (which regulates medical professions) to help all hospitals and outpatient facilities reduce medical errors by verifying the patient and surgical site before, during, and after a procedure. But surgeons aren’t the only ones at fault; general practitioners and internists, as well as emergency room doctors and pediatricians, were as much to blame, the study authors report.

The study was introduced in 2004 by the Joint Commission (which regulates medical professions) to help all hospitals and outpatient facilities reduce medical errors by verifying the patient and surgical site before, during, and after a procedure. But surgeons aren’t the only ones at fault; general practitioners and internists, as well as emergency room doctors and pediatricians, were as much to blame, the study authors report.

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This is personal.

“My mother died of colon cancer when she was only 56.”

Terrence Howard, actor/musician

Colorectal cancer is the 2nd leading cancer killer in the U.S., but it’s largely preventable. If you’re 50 or older, please get screened.

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

www.cdc.gov/screenforlife

The Nancy Davis Foundation for Multiple Sclerosis is a non-profit organization dedicated to the treatment and ultimate cure of MS. Funding research in the labs of 15 of the nation’s top MS research centers.

START SHOPPING
I have a health issue. How can I find the best treatment for it?

WebMD Medical Editor

Osteoporosis

TOP SYMPTOMS INCLUDE

- Backache
- Gradual loss of height and stooped posture
- Fractures of the spine, wrist, or hip
- None

Osteoporosis, the severe thinning and weakening of the bones, is a slow-growing disease that may first become apparent with the above symptoms—or none at all, until a person sits down, lifts a bag of groceries, or just coughs and fractures her spine, wrist, or hip. Those fractures, in turn, can result in chronic pain, disability, even the loss of independence. Risk increases with age (especially for post-menopausal women) and tests to detect its progression are available, but prevention is key. Get plenty of calcium and weight-bearing exercise, such as walking, running, and aerobics. If you have osteoporosis already, these measures, plus medications, can help slow the rate of bone loss.

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Where can people living with \textit{lupus} go to find their voice—and many reassuring echoes?

As someone who’s living with lupus, you may sometimes feel alone. But there’s a whole group of people living with lupus coming together. Whether we have lupus or care about someone who does, we are taking on our challenges together, and not giving in to them. We are learning from each other and moving forward. We are the \textbf{us in lupus}.

Where can you find us? At the \url{usinlupus.com}. There you’ll find stories for us—inspired by us. You’ll get access to information about living well with lupus. Best of all, you’ll find the voice of people living with lupus—and a community that embraces it.

Visit the \url{usinlupus.com/joinus} today.
Or call 1-855-USINLUPUS (1-855-874-6587).

Some people featured in the \textbf{us in lupus} are paid spokespeople for Human Genome Sciences, Inc. and GlaxoSmithKline.
To join us, fill out and return this card. Or visit the usinlupus.com today.

the us in lupus

 together we're stronger
4. Please indicate how much lupus impacts your ability to perform your daily responsibilities.
   (1=Not at all; 5=Very significantly)
   1 2 3 4 5

5. Please indicate how much lupus impacts your sense of self-worth.
   (1=Not at all; 5=Very significantly)
   1 2 3 4 5

6. Please rate your agreement with the following statement:
   "I seldom experience pain from lupus that interferes with my daily routine."
   (1=Completely disagree; 5=Completely agree)
   1 2 3 4 5

7. Please rate your agreement with the following statement:
   "My healthcare professional is the best there is when it comes to managing my lupus."
   (1=Completely disagree; 5=Completely agree)
   1 2 3 4 5

Human Genome Sciences, Inc. (HGS) and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) understand that your privacy is important. By
providing your name, address, or other information, you are giving HGS and GSK and companies working with us
permission to: (please check all that apply)
   □ Market or advertise to you about lupus
   □ Market or advertise to you about medicines that treat lupus
   We will not sell or transfer your name, address, or other information to any other party for their marketing use.
   You are able to unsubscribe at any time by visiting uninkpus.com

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I stick to my diet until my stress level hits a certain point. Then I binge and feel horrible. How can I stop?

First off, a definition. A “binge” is the rapid consumption of an excessive amount of food at one sitting, usually 1,000 to 2,000 calories or more. Many people binge because they are anxious or depressed. Many binge secretly, which brings on more feelings of shame and guilt.

Research shows that consuming large quantities of refined sugar and fat really does decrease levels of stress hormones. But the resulting calmness is short-lived, and afterward, you’re likely to feel emotionally drained as well as physically uncomfortable.

At its core, binging is not about food. It’s about a consistent difficulty coping with life’s ups and downs.

A few tips. Learn to be mindful of every mouthful you eat. Try sitting down and breathing deeply when you feel stressed, rather than running to the fridge. Get help learning new problem-solving skills—ones that are productive and constructive, not self-destructive. Keep junk food out of your house, so if you do binge, you do it on healthy food. Most important: Learn to forgive yourself when you binge. Falling off the wagon occasionally is natural when you’re learning new habits.

I’ve heard that I can’t take my newborn outside for a month. Is this true?

The idea that babies have to stay inside the house for several weeks after they’re born is FALSE. In fact, as long as your baby is healthy, getting some fresh air can be great for mom and baby if you take a few precautions.

First, be careful not to over- or underdress your baby when you leave the house. Your best bet is to put as many layers on her as you’re wearing yourself, and keep a blanket handy.

Second, be sure to keep her out of direct sunlight. “Newborns’ delicate skin burns easily, and that kind of early skin damage can increase their lifelong risk of skin cancer,” says Anne Hansen, MD, MPH, medical director of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Children’s Hospital Boston. “Keep them fully shaded with clothing or an umbrella.”

And third, while there’s no preventing your baby from getting sick, try to stay away from places where you know there are people who are ill. What’s most important, however, is for baby to have a happy, healthy, and well-rested mom. Hansen says, “And natural light, exercise, and fresh air can help.”

I’ve had two children, and I don’t want any more. I’m thinking about getting my tubes tied, but what are the risks?

The term “tubes tied” refers to a bilateral tubal ligation (BTL), when a woman’s Fallopian tubes are severed and sealed to prevent her eggs from becoming fertilized. BTLs can be done several different ways, including using clips, rings, sutures, and cauterization to seal the tubes shut.

The physical side effects of getting your tubes tied are usually minimal. Recovery from the surgery is relatively quick, and studies show most women don’t have any changes afterward in menstruation, sexual function, or moods. There is a slight risk of pregnancy after having a BTL—about 1.8%—and if you do get pregnant, there’s a 30% chance of it being ectopic (when the fertilized egg lodges in the Fallopian tube). But in general, this is a safe procedure.

Patients often ask me if it’s possible to have a BTL reversed. It is, but the procedure is fairly expensive (between $1,500 and $6,500), and it’s rarely covered by insurance. There’s also no guarantee that you’ll get pregnant. Studies indicate that women are able to conceive after the procedure only about 55% of the time. So it’s best to think of a BTL as permanent birth control.
Golden Rules

Test your smarts about dietary needs as you age

By Christina Boufis, WebMD Contributing Writer

Do you need to change what and how you eat in your 50s, 60s, and beyond? Yes, though maybe not in ways you might think. Fallacies about nutritional needs later in life abound, and it’s not always easy to separate myth from fact, especially because a lot of information is aimed at younger adults.

1 You should eat less as you get older.

True. “Energy requirements decrease with every decade,” says Connie Bales, PhD, RD, professor of medicine at Duke University Medical Center and associate director of the Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center at Durham VA Medical Center. “We move around less, we have less muscle, and our metabolic rate goes down.” But Bales says the challenge while eating less overall is to consume more nutrient-rich foods, such as low-fat milk and lean meat, which calorie for calorie, pack more of a nutritional punch.

2 Nutritional needs decrease with age.

False. People often think because you need fewer calories as you age, you need fewer nutrients. That’s not the case. Your body requires the same amount of protein, vitamins, and minerals and, in some instances, even more nutrients.

Take B-12, for example. After age 50, your body’s ability to absorb the vitamin often decreases due to reduced stomach acids needed to break it down from food sources. The same holds true for vitamin D. Aging skin is less able than younger skin to convert the vitamin from sunlight, which in turn affects the body’s ability to absorb calcium—and both vitamin D and calcium are needed to prevent bone loss. That’s why taking a daily vitamin/mineral supplement is a good idea; so is talking to your doctor to see if you need additional supplements beyond the multivitamin, Bales says.

3 It’s OK to skip meals if you’re not hungry.

It depends. “If it’s once a week, that’s fine. But if this happens regularly, I don’t think it is,” Bales says. While it’s true that you generally eat less as you age, she explains, “you don’t always respond to the need for food with the normal hunger sensation,” perhaps due to neurological or chemical changes in the body.

Frequently skipping meals can backfire nutritionally. “It’s not good to go eight hours without protein,” Bales explains. “The body needs a regular supply of protein and essential nutrients to maintain metabolism, and for making bone and muscle and enzymes.” Try to eat every few hours—even if it’s a light meal like a peanut butter sandwich.

4 Older people need to drink less fluid.

False. Though it may seem that you aren’t as thirsty, that doesn’t mean you need to drink less. “You don’t always respond to dehydration with the normal thirst sensation,” Bales says. “Our regulatory processes are just not as sharp.” So you might not feel thirsty even when dehydrated. Her recommendation? Drink six glasses of water daily and other fluids as well.

Perhaps the biggest myth about nutrition and aging? That older people are set in their ways, Bales says. “That really is not true. I’ve found that most are really motivated about their health, and many of them are quite willing to try to change.”

Explore the entire series of Golden Rules articles for more facts about the changing nutritional needs of each decade. Get all the facts about your changing nutritional needs.
Foot Soldiers

Step into spring with our expert picks for softer, more radiant feet

**Sole Salvation**
Spread L’Occitane Shea Butter Foot Cream on your toes to keep them hydrated.

**Close Shave**
Shred dead skin with the easy-to-use Pediggle Pro Pedicure Foot File with Handle.

**Sleep Walk**
Get some work done while you snooze with Dr. Scholl’s Ultra Overnight Foot Cream.

**Steer Clear**
Use OPI Start-to-Finish Base & Top Coat to protect your nails from discoloration.

**Foot Cream**
Ultra Overnight with while you snooze get some work done Sleep Walk

softer, more radiant feet

them hydrated.

Butter Foot Cream
Spread
Sole Salvation

**Intensive Repair Foot Creme**
($5.59), which
contains hydrating urea. In addition to skin-slooshing benzoic acid, Listerine contains
ethanol, which kills bacteria, fungi, and germs that can lead to athlete’s foot.

Coating feet in a cream like Burt’s Bees Thoroughly Therapeutic Honey & Bilberry Foot Creme ($10), which is loaded with moisture-replenishing honey and jojoba oil, and wearing socks to bed is an excellent way to lock in moisture for softer feet. If you can’t stand to sleep in socks, place a humidifier at the foot of your bed to keep feet hydrated. Treat thick, dry patches on your feet by massaging them with L’Occitane Shea Butter Foot Cream ($126), which is packed with moisture-locking shea butter.

If you painted your toes in rich, dark hues throughout the winter, you may be noticing some nail yellowing. Take a break from polish for a week or two, and the discoloration will slowly fade. Once you’re back to coating your toenails in polish, be sure to start with a clear base coat without Formaldehyde, a chemical that can react with the keratin protein in nails and make them change colors. The Formaldehyde-free OPI Start-to-Finish Base & Top Coat ($15.95) is a good one to try.

**Liquid Gold**
It’s OK to put your feet in your mouthwash—if it’s Listerine Antiseptic.

**Repair Shop**
Meidl’s Family feet with Eucerin Plus Intensive Repair Foot Creme.

**Treasure Chest**
Battle bacteria and treat dry patches with Vicks VapoRub topical ointment.

**Toe the Line**
A normal nail bed is pink and smooth. Anything other than that may be a sign of a serious medical condition, says podiatrist Eric Reynolds, DPM. Here’s what to wary of.

**Are they green?**
This might be a bacterial or fungal infection caused by trauma to the nail—the tint could be from trapped fluid or pus underneath the nail.

**Are there horizontal ridges?**
Bumpy lines that run across the nail may be an indication of chronic eczema on the skin under or around the toenail.

**Are there vertical ridges?**
Some people with rheumatoid arthritis or problems with circulation have lines running along the length of their toenails.

**Find more expert pedi cures and remedies.**

**Dr. Reynolds says:**
During winter months when humidity is low, skin dries out more rapidly. In some cases, feet get so dry they peel or crack. While there are plenty of prescription medications that work wonders, I like to start with home remedies, which are inexpensive and can be just as effective.

To soften super-dry areas, soak your feet in original Listerine Antiseptic mouthwash ($4) once or twice a week. Mix one part Listerine with two parts warm water in a basin and soak your feet for 15 to 20 minutes, then apply a moisturizer like Eucerin Plus Intensive Repair Foot Creme ($5.59), which contains hydrating urea. In addition to skin-slooshing benzoic acid, Listerine contains ethanol, which kills bacteria, fungi, and germs that can lead to athlete’s foot.

Coating feet in a cream like Burt’s Bees Thoroughly Therapeutic Honey & Bilberry Foot Creme ($10), which is loaded with moisture-replenishing honey and jojoba oil, and wearing socks to bed is an excellent way to lock in moisture for softer feet. If you can’t stand to sleep in socks, place a humidifier at the foot of your bed to keep feet hydrated. Treat thick, dry patches on your feet by massaging them with L’Occitane Shea Butter Foot Cream ($126), which is packed with moisture-locking shea butter.

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**Dr. Tanzi says:**
During winter months when humidity is low, skin dries out more rapidly. In some cases, feet get so dry they peel or crack. While there are plenty of prescription medications that work wonders, I like to start with home remedies, which are inexpensive and can be just as effective.

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Elizabeth Tanzi, MD, co-director, Washington Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery, Washington, D.C.

**WebMD.com**
Everyone loves a dazzling smile. That’s why so many of us reach for the bleach when our pearly whites start to look more like kernels of corn.

Common foods and drinks, such as coffee, red wine, and berries, and, of course, smoking, cause teeth to stain and lose their brightness. The effects are often exaggerated as we age, says Mark Wolff, DDS, PhD, professor at NYU College of Dentistry. Wear and tear creates etchings on the tooth surface, “making teeth more susceptible to stains,” Wolff says. That’s why you might notice that foods you’ve been eating for years discolor your teeth more these days.

Teeth whiteners, sold by dentists and drugstores, use a form of peroxide (hydrogen and carbamide are the most common) of varying strengths to oxidize or eat away at the tooth’s color particles to brighten smiles. The amount of peroxide in store-bought kits ranges from 3% to 10%; in professional-grade whiteners (available in your dentist’s office), it runs as high as 35%.

It is true that professional whiteners are generally more effective than those sold over the counter, but not just because the concentration of peroxide used is higher. More important for effective whitening, Wolff says, is that whitening trays made by dentists are molded especially for your mouth, keeping bleaching solutions in close contact with the tooth’s surface. This not only enhances the whitening effect but also increases safety by minimizing the amount of peroxide that contacts the gums or is swallowed. However, that personalized fit will cost you: Professional whitening systems range from $400 to $800, compared with $25 to $100 for products you buy in the store.

But lower cost doesn’t necessarily mean poor quality, and OTC whiteners can be a good option, Wolff says. Whitening strips are your best bet because they adhere reasonably well to the tooth surface, particularly on the top teeth, keeping gel where it can best penetrate enamel.

White teeth are alluring, but keep expectations in check. “There’s only a finite color change you can achieve,” Wolff says. Two or three shades lighter than your current color is reasonable. And be sure to follow instructions. Overdoing whitening efforts can harm tooth structure, leading to translucence—see-through teeth that appear blue or gray. That’s why, Wolff says, transforming a dull, yellow smile into a bright, white one is best handled like most things in life: “Everything in moderation.”—Lisa Zamosky

White Wash
Mark Wolff, DDS, PhD, offers some tips for safely whitening your smile:

Be sensitive. Tooth and gum sensitivity is a common side effect of teeth whitening. “You don’t want to use the strongest and fastest (solution) because it comes with the most side effects,” Wolff says.

Avoid rainbow teeth. If you have bonding or veneers on your teeth, whiten before having dental work done or skip it altogether. “These don’t whiten with bleaching agents,” Wolff says. Restorations will maintain their original color while the teeth around them lighten. The end result is a multi-colored smile.

Go for strips. OTC whitening strips are a better bet than store-bought trays. “The trays tend to be loose and so don’t provide a high enough concentration [of solution] to really do the job of bleaching,” Wolff says.

Know when to pass. If you’ve been diagnosed with gum disease, talk with your dentist about alternate ways to brighten your smile. Whiteners can accelerate gum disease.
Right Brain

Learning to be fair may be more than good manners. It might be hardwired into our prefrontal cortex.

When Lori West’s kids complain, “That’s not fair!” she responds with, “Wow, you are so smart! You’ve already learned that, and you’re only 6.” West, a 39-year-old stay-at-home mother of five in Virginia Beach, Va., found that her brood began grappling with issues of fairness while they were still toddlers. Research shows we tend to dislike unfair situations, and that this aversion is part of the way the brain reacts to rewards. A recent study showed that our objection to unfairness holds true even for the person who benefits from the unfair situation. In this study, one of a pair of strangers was randomly designated as rich and given $50 in cash. The other person was “poor” and got no money. Then, as their brains were scanned, each was shown an additional amount of money that one of them might receive.

It’s not surprising that, when the poor man saw the potential of his receiving a bonus, the striatum and the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, two areas of the brain that decide how much we like something, showed more activity. What was surprising was that the reward center of the rich man’s brain also showed more activity at the idea of the poor man’s getting a payout. More surprising was that when the rich man got even more money while the poor one stayed poor, brain activity went down, showing that he found this less rewarding.

It’s possible that serotonin, a brain chemical that helps control mood, contributes to the unpleasantness we feel about injustice. Research shows that as serotonin falls, we react more strongly to inequity. In other words, our sense of fairness isn’t based entirely on social rules we’ve learned. It’s an integral part of the way our brain responds to rewards: We like to see the underdog win.

From an evolutionary perspective, it makes sense, says Elizabeth Tricomi, PhD, assistant professor of psychology at Rutgers University, who conducted the study. “When we cooperate, we all might get something better than if we only cared about ourselves.”—Susan Kuchinskas

FAIRLY YOUNG

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Studies have shown that people who keep a food journal lose twice the weight than those who rely on diet and exercise alone.”

*DyK?

More than 75% of Americans think our morals are getting worse, a recent Gallup poll reveals.

Do you know the do’s and don’ts of teaching kids values?

WebMD.com

Fad diets don’t work. Creating a weight loss plan does work.
Sleep Starved
The surprising link between early-childhood snooze time and weight problems later in life

You’ve probably heard that increased TV watching, high-calorie snacking, and decreased physical activity are linked to skyrocketing rates of children’s obesity. But recent research points to a new culprit: lack of sleep. “Children who don’t sleep enough are at much greater risk for obesity than children who do sleep enough,” says Frederick Zimmerman.

J. Zimmerman, PhD, chair and professor in the Department of Health Services at UCLA School of Public Health, and one of the lead researchers in a recent study, says, “If you took a group of 100 kids who were not sleeping well, about 25 or so would wind up obese who otherwise wouldn’t be.” Zimmerman explains, “That’s why researchers say “there is a critical window prior to age 5,” when inadequate nighttime sleep can set the stage for childhood obesity for years to come. The difference between those who got enough sleep and those who didn’t? About 45 minutes, Zimmerman estimates.

The study didn’t explore causal mechanisms behind inadequate sleep and weight gain, though Zimmerman suspects several factors. “Younger kids, even kids who are 6 and 8 years old, who are under-slept are uncomfortable,” says Zimmerman. And they might try to feel better by eating. Also, hormones involved in regulating appetite, leptin and ghrelin, are thrown off-kilter by inadequate sleep in adults, and the same might happen in children. Finally, there’s the possibility that kids who are really tired just aren’t able or don’t want to do a lot of physical activity. Clearly, more research is needed in all these areas.

One surprising result of the study: Napping did not reduce the risk of obesity. “The bottom line: ’Getting adequate [nighttime] sleep is one of the easiest ways to reduce the risk of obesity,’” Zimmerman says.—Christine Bozzi

KIDS WHO HAD INADEQUATE NIGHTTIME SLEEP HAD ABOUT AN 80% HIGHER RISK OF OBESITY.

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Fit to a Fault

Measuring your target heart rate may not be the best way to track your workout, ladies. Here’s why

Fitness buffs have long turned to heart rate monitors—either ones they own or those found on exercise machines—as a way of gauging whether they’re exercising hard enough. But heart rate monitors aren’t as helpful as you might think.

The problem? First off, the numbers used to calculate your maximum heart rate are a little squishy. The traditional calculation has been based solely on age, but factors like fitness level and genetics also play a role in just what heart rate is healthy or even safe for individuals. If you’re quite sedentary, for instance, and you try to reach the peak heart rate for your age group, you could get into cardiovascular trouble quickly—trouble that includes breathlessness and dizziness. In fact, the latest research suggests that the traditional calculation isn’t right for, oh, just about half of the population.

Under the old guidelines, you were told to subtract your age from 220 for an estimate of your maximum safe heart rate and then multiply it by 85% to get your “target” heart rate. But the studies that gave rise to this equation were only done on men. And, after looking at the correlation between heart rate and heart attack in the exercise tests of more than 5,000 women, researchers at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago found the maximum heart rate for a woman really should be determined by subtracting .88 of her age (her age multiplied by 0.88) from 206. The new math may sound like gobbledygook, but here’s the takeaway: If you’re a woman and if you’ve found the goals hyped by personal trainers and elliptical machines to be too strenuous, you’re justified in slowing down a bit. A 40-year-old woman who has been aiming for a maximum rate of 180 beats per minute (with a target rate of 153 beats per minute), for instance, can now strive for a maximum rate of 171 beats per minute (with a target rate of 145 beats per minute).

More important, while treadmills and elliptical machines often let you monitor your heart rate (and even provide tidy charts of “fat burning” and “cardiovascular training” zones), tailoring your workout to your heart rate is not as important as tailoring it to how you feel. That is, you can have an excellent workout at a lower or higher heart rate than what’s recommended, depending on what you do and how long you do it—and as long as it’s fun.

IS YOUR WORKOUT TOO HARD?

How do you know if you’re exercising too intensely? Watch out for these four classic symptoms.

Chest pain, irregular heartbeat, or extreme shortness of breath: These can all be signs of heart distress. Stop exercising immediately and get emergency help.

Chills, muscle pain, or blurred vision: If these occur when you’re working out in the heat, stop exercising and get medical help. You may be having heat stroke.

Headache, dizziness, or lightheadedness: These can indicate dehydration. Stop what you’re doing and take a water break. If you don’t feel better, seek medical attention.

Severe fatigue: After exercise this could signal overexertion or heart attack. If you’re pregnant, be alert for all these symptoms, as well as vaginal bleeding, uterine contractions, and blood or fluid leaking from your vagina. All can signal a serious problem with you or your baby.
Are You Covered?

Do you have the right kind of health insurance plan for your family’s needs?

Once upon a time, having health insurance meant security. If you got sick, your care was covered. At least that’s what we all thought. But a 2009 study published in The American Journal of Medicine found that in 2007, 62% of all bankruptcies in this country were related to medical expenses. And three out of four people with medical debt had health insurance.

The difference between a good and not-so-good health insurance plan makes a huge impact on both your health and finances. So, how can you tell which plan is right for you?

Know What Your Maximum Financial Exposure Is in a Worst-Case Scenario

The answer is yes, you’re essentially uninsured if you need to receive care. “The best place to look for that information is in your plan description,” explains Tracy Watts, health and billing advocate with Billing Advocates of America. If you have a waiting period for pre-existing conditions (some only pay for certain diagnoses), Butcher says. Does your health plan exclude care for certain health conditions (maternity care is a common one), or require a waiting period for pre-existing conditions (something that will go away when health reform goes into effect in 2014)? If the answer is yes, you’re essentially uninsured if you need to receive care. “The best place to look for that information is in the list of excluded benefits found in your summary plan description,” explains Tracy Watts, health and benefits partner with the consulting firm Mercer. Your best strategy is to go back to the basics. Boring it may be, “Review your policy book from front to back,” Butcher advises—Lisa Zamosky

Get Your Plan to Work Harder

Health plan expert Candy Butcher offers these tips for getting the most coverage out of your health insurance.

Watch it. If you’re having surgery at an in-network hospital, make sure every health professional you see while admitted is in your network as well. Surprise bills have been known to show up for out-of-network anesthesiologists, radiologists, and pathologists a patient didn’t agree to see while hospitalized.

Inspect it. Insurance plans with caps on services, such as lab tests and X-rays, often stop processing your claims once you’ve reached your maximum limit on your out-of-pocket expenses. And three out of four people with medical bills you pay once the deductible has been met and insurance coverage kicks in). The same is true for plans with dollar limits on pre-existing conditions, Butcher says.

Important Safety Information

NUVIGIL may cause serious side effects including a serious rash or a serious allergic reaction that may affect parts of your body such as your liver or blood cells, and may result in hospitalization and be life-threatening. If you develop a skin rash, blisters, swelling, peeling, or yellowing of the skin or eyes, trouble swallowing or breathing, dark urine, or fever, stop taking NUVIGIL and call your doctor right away or get emergency help. NUVIGIL is not approved for children under 17.

NUVIGIL is a federally controlled substance (C-IV), so use NUVIGIL only as directed and keep in a safe place to prevent misuse and abuse. Individual results may vary. NUVIGIL may not stop all of your sleepiness and do not take the place of sleep. Reduced alertness (EEG) and sleepiness may increase the risk of a serious adverse reaction that may affect parts of your body such as your liver or blood cells, and may result in hospitalization and be life-threatening. If you develop a skin rash, blisters, swelling, peeling, or yellowing of the skin or eyes, trouble swallowing or breathing, dark urine, or fever, stop taking NUVIGIL and call your doctor right away or get emergency help. NUVIGIL is not approved for children under 17. NUVIGIL may not stop all of your sleepiness and do not take the place of sleep. Reduced alertness (EEG) and sleepiness may increase the risk of a serious adverse reaction that may affect parts of your body such as your liver or blood cells, and may result in hospitalization and be life-threatening. If you develop a skin rash, blisters, swelling, peeling, or yellowing of the skin or eyes, trouble swallowing or breathing, dark urine, or fever, stop taking NUVIGIL and call your doctor right away or get emergency help. NUVIGIL is not approved for children under 17.

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NUVIGIL® (nu-vij-el) Tablets [C-IV]

**Important facts**

**What is NUVIGIL?**

NUVIGIL® is a prescription medicine used to improve wakefulness in adults who are very sleepy due to one of the following diagnosed sleep disorders:

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NUVIGIL® is used with other medical treatments for this sleep disorder. NUVIGIL® does not take the place of using your CPAP machine or other treatments that your doctor has prescribed for this condition. It is important that you continue to use these treatments as prescribed by your doctor.

**What is the most important information I should know about NUVIGIL?**

NUVIGIL may cause serious side effects including a serious rash or a serious allergic reaction that may affect parts of your body such as your liver or blood cells. Any of these may need to be treated in a hospital and may be life-threatening. Stop taking NUVIGIL and call your doctor right away or get emergency help if you have any of these symptoms:

- Skin rash, hives, soreness in your mouth or nose or skin blisters and peeling
- Swelling of your face, eyes, lips, tongue, or throat
- Trouble swallowing or breathing
- Fever, chills, sore throat, rash, shingles
- Painful or difficult urination
- Swelling of the legs, abdomen, or joints
- Trouble breathing
- Dark urine, pale stools, yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes
- Difficulty swallowing

Common side effects that can happen in anyone who takes NUVIGIL include headache, nausea, dizziness, and trouble sleeping.

**When should I avoid taking NUVIGIL?**

- Do not drive a car or do other dangerous activities until you know how NUVIGIL affects you. People with sleep disorders should always change their daily habits until your doctor tells you it is okay.
- You should avoid drinking alcohol. It is not known how drinking alcohol will affect you when taking NUVIGIL.

**What should I tell my doctor before taking NUVIGIL?**

Tell your doctor about all of your medical conditions including:

- A history of mental/health problems, including psychosis
- Have heart problems or a head attack
- Have high blood pressure. Your blood pressure may need to be checked more often while taking NUVIGIL.
- Have liver or kidney problems
- Have a history of drug or alcohol abuse or addiction
- Are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. It is not known if NUVIGIL will harm your unborn baby.
- Are breastfeeding. It is not known if NUVIGIL passes into your milk.

**Who should not take NUVIGIL?**

Do not take NUVIGIL if you:

- Are allergic to any of its ingredients. See the end of the Medication Guide for a complete list of ingredients in NUVIGIL.
- Have had a rash or allergic reaction to another armodafinil (NUVIGIL) or modafinil (PROVIGIL). These medicines are very similar.

**Need more information?**

Read the Medication Guide that comes with NUVIGIL before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your condition or treatment.

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist, go to www.NUVIGIL.com, or call 1-800-896-5855.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, call 1-800-FDA-1088, or by fax at 1-800-FDA-0178.

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The language center of the brain develops a year or two later in boys than in girls, giving girls a head start in reading and writing skills.
**ANATOMY OF VANILLA**

**Time's Up**
The flower that produces the vanilla bean lasts only one day. The beans are handpicked and then cured, wrapped, and dried in a process that takes four to six months.

**On Ice**
Nearly 30% of Americans choose vanilla as their No. 1 ice cream flavor (followed by chocolate, at less than 10%).

**Bee’s Knees**
Only the Melipona bee, found in Central America, can pollinate vanilla. In other parts of the world, humans duplicate the process using a wooden needle.

**Simple Syrup**
One tablespoon of vanilla extract has 37 calories, a large portion of which comes from sugars and alcohol.—Chloe Thompson

**Sole Provider**
Vanilla is the only fruit-bearing member of the orchid family.

**Bean Count**
Pure vanilla extract contains 13.35 ounces of vanilla beans per gallon during extraction, according to FDA specifications.

**Sticker Shock**
After saffron, vanilla is the most expensive spice in the world.

**Sweet ‘Script**
In Europe, vanilla was once used in the production of certain medicines such as nerve stimulants and as an aphrodisiac.

**Smart Start**
I would be thrilled if drinking coffee was proven to be the most nutritious way to start the day. Unfortunately for me and all the other caffeine addicts out there, it’s not. Besides, I’m not just cooking for myself in the morning—I’m cooking for my family. Just serving coffee won’t cut it.

And here’s why: Numerous studies show that eating a complete breakfast improves kids’ academic and behavioral performance as well as their school attendance rate. The end result? Your family needs a tasty, filling breakfast that provides them with energy for the whole morning—and gives you the satisfaction of knowing you fed them well. Here are some tips for getting your day started right.

Smooth it out. One of the fastest (and yummiest) ways to get fruit, protein, and calcium into your family is with smoothies. I like to use frozen organic berries when fresh ones aren’t in season—they have more flavor and vitamins than out-of-season berries. And frozen bananas add a rich, creamy texture.

Add it in. Adding healthy ingredients to standard breakfast fare can boost the nutritional level considerably. Try adding ricotta cheese and whole grain flour to pancakes, for instance, to create more protein, calcium, and fiber per serving.

Switch it up. Think of creative ways to substitute healthy ingredients for not-so-healthy ones (like fat, sugar, and refined carbohydrates). For example, I like to make a simple sauce with the runny yolk of the egg itself. The kids think it tastes great, and I like the nutrition they’re getting in every bite. Everyone wins.

**Guiltless French Toast**
Makes 4 servings (one slice per person)

**Ingredients**
8 large egg whites
1 tsp vanilla
½ cup orange juice (or juice from two oranges)
1 tsp cinnamon
4 slices whole wheat bread (no corn syrup or hydrogenated oil)
4 pads butter
1 tbsp pure maple syrup
1 cup fresh blueberries

**Directions**
1. Mix egg whites, vanilla, orange juice, and cinnamon together in a shallow dish. 
2. Soak the bread until it has absorbed most of the liquid. Heat a pan or griddle and add butter.
3. Pout bread in pan and pour remaining egg batter onto bread. Cook a few minutes, then flip.
4. Toast is done when both sides are golden. Top with fresh berries and maple syrup.

**Per serving:** 200 calories, 11 g protein, 25 g carbohydrates, 5 g fat (3 g saturated fat), 11 mg cholesterol, 3 g fiber, 13 g sugar, and 272 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 23%.
On the spectrum of mommy sainthood, Julie Bowen is much like her character Claire Dunphy on ABC’s hit TV show Modern Family. She lands somewhere on the higher end of the scale but falls far short of perfection—and that’s OK with her.

This proud working mom of three boys—all under age 3—remains a self-admitted control freak, however: “I function on the belief that if I were not around, the wheels would slowly fall off the bus, and no one would ever be dressed or fed,” she jokes.

Still, after she and husband Scott Phillips, a software engineer, welcomed twins John and Gus, now 22 months, when their firstborn Oliver was just hitting the “terrible twos”—within weeks of her landing the role on what has become the No. 1 comedy on television—the in-demand actress knew something had to give.

By Lauren Paige Kennedy
WebMD Contributing Writer

Julie Bowen’s tricks and tips for balancing TV’s No. 1 comedy and family—no easy feat with three kids under age 3

Reviewed by Louise Chang, MD
WebMD MEDICAL EDITOR
“I’ve heard all the evidence about television for kids, but every now and then Yo Gabba Gabba! is your best friend when you need to get the dishes done or just chill out for a minute.”

The Modern Family cast took home a Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Comedy Series in January—has become a certifiable fan favorite. The series hilariously depicts a dysfunctional clan of three interconnected couples who marry themes of gay partnership, foreign adoption, May-December romance, culture clashes, religious differences, warping spouses, and uppity teenagers. In other words: real life.

Bowen as Claire is a mom who believes she knows best—but much to her chagrin (and the audience’s delight) very often doesn’t. Women especially respond to Bowen’s character because she makes so many laugh-inducing mistakes. They love her because she mirrors just about every well-meaning if fallible mother out there.

Under Pressure

The Baltimore-bred actress first earned household-name status as the primary love interest on the series Ed from 2000 to 2004. Bowen made additional star turns in the 1996 film, Weeds, as well as in Adam Sandler’s 2004. Bowen made additional star turns on Modern Family as well as other acting credits. Bowen is known for her ability to strike a balance between motherhood and her career.

“‘Having it all’ was not what the women’s movement of the 1960s and ’70s was about. It was about having choice and opportunity. It’s been twisted into this notion that women are supposed to have the amazing career and the amazing kids and the amazing husband and the amazing body—all at once. Men don’t have it all—and they never have. Why do modern women believe they can have—no, expect to have—everything, all at once? Something has to give.”

Bowen with her oldest son, Oliver.
“Faces of Influenza” (facesofinfluenza.org), about the importance of getting an annual flu shot.

“The flu is a significant disease,” says Norman H. Edelman, MD, chief medical officer of the ALA. “Each year between 10% and 15% of all Americans get it. An estimated 15,000 to 40,000 die from complications.”

“It’s a privilege to get to educate people,” Bowen adds. “Everybody should make the choice that’s right for them. But, please,” she adds, “make an educated choice.”

A Good Pace

It’s clear that Bowen is a woman on the run. So it comes as no surprise that she jogs nearly every morning. “You can pick up a pair of sneakers anywhere and you’re off,” she says. “And 45 minutes later, you’ve had a great workout.”

Anyone who’s caught Bowen glammed-up and glowing with good health on recent awards shows can testify she looks downright amazing, considering the woman is in her fourth decade of life and has birthed three babies since 2007. What’s her secret?

For starters, she’s the first one to tell you that staying in shape takes hard work. It also requires sleep, the aforementioned daily runs, plus the commitment to do both.

“I front-load it,” she says of getting a good night’s rest, meaning she’s typically in bed before 10 p.m., a healthy habit that enables her to rise by 5 a.m. and run a few miles before the kids wake up.

Surprisingly, Bowen has worn a pacemaker since she was diagnosed in her early 20s with a cardiovascular condition where the regular heartbeat can drop to dangerously low levels. The pacemaker “serves as a monitor for me,” she explains, kicking in when her heart requires it.

And while she doesn’t “hear or feel” the device, she’s grateful “to live during a time when the technology exists to treat my condition,” and is in “excellent health.”

Managing a significant health complication helps her understand the importance of staying fit. But there are emotional benefits, too. “Running puts me in a better mood,” she says. “For me, it’s brain medicine.”

Still, Bowen is fast to repeat her philosophy: “If this doesn’t work for people, I don’t begrudge them one iota. If you like to work out once a week, or work out after work, great. I like to come home and just be with the kids. So I exercise early…I’m willing to give up late nights and going out in order to get up early—and that’s fine.”

Which seems like a perfectly reasonable position to take for a seriously stretched, almost comically busy modern mother of three.

The destination that helps you and your family achieve the fit lifestyle including:

- FOOD: Nutritional Fitness
- MOVE: Physical Fitness
- MOOD: Emotional Fitness
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Learning and living a healthy lifestyle is a family affair. fit is designed with that in mind with worksheets, videos, and games customized for different ages. There’s also a section just for parents.

**Fit: The Place for KIDS to Play & Learn About Healthy Habits**

(C)2007 ABC NEWS/PHOTO
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At last, the first warm days of spring! Time to open the windows, pack away the winter coats, get out in the garden—and head to the pharmacy to stock up on allergy medications.

If you greet the arrival of spring each year with a stuffy nose and watery eyes instead of a happy heart, it’s time to take a new look at your seasonal allergies. You may have been struggling with spring allergies for years, but that doesn’t mean you can’t learn a few new tricks about coping with them.

With the help of one of the nation’s top allergy experts, WebMD has put together some tips for managing seasonal allergies that can help you enjoy spring instead of just suffering through it.

About 48 million people in the United States have some type of “indoor/outdoor” allergy, known as seasonal allergies, hay fever, or allergic rhinitis, says James Sublett, MD, FACAAI, a clinical professor and section chief of pediatric allergy at the University of Louisville School of Medicine and managing partner of Family Allergy and Asthma in Louisville, Ky.

“Allergies have a strong genetic component—if your parents had allergies, you’re far more likely to have them yourself,” he explains. “Most allergies develop in childhood, but in some people, they develop later after exposure to environmental factors ‘flips the switch.’ For example, we know that diesel particulate exposure can trigger allergies. The end result is a runaway response in the immune system,” he says.

Among the most common allergy triggers, according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, are:

- Tree, grass, and weed pollen
- Mold spores
- Dust mite and cockroach allergens
- Cat, dog, and rodent dander

Seasonal and other indoor/outdoor allergies aren’t just annoying. Asthma is sometimes triggered by allergies (although most people with allergies do not develop asthma). But if you do have asthma and your allergies aren’t well controlled, you may be more likely to have asthma attacks, which can be dangerous and even life-threatening.

Here’s what you need to know to control your allergy symptoms before they ruin a perfectly good spring season.

By Gina Shaw, WebMD Contributing Writer

Spring is coming! Time to open the windows, pack away the winter coats, get out in the garden—and head to the pharmacy to stock up on allergy medications.

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Start Early

Spring pollen season starts much earlier than many people think. In large swaths of the country, including the Eastern Seaboard and the Ohio Valley, pollen starts filling the air as soon as the weather warms up just enough for the trees to begin budding.

"Here in Kentucky, we see pollen sometimes in mid-February," says Sublett. "As long as you’re not in the snow belt up around the Great Lakes, the pollen season starts very early, and by mid-March we’ll have our first peak."

This means that if you take medications to control your seasonal allergies, the time to start them is mid- to late February, not late March. "Allergies create an inflammatory response that is like a smoldering fire. If you can keep it smoldering rather than flaring, you’ll do a lot better," says Sublett.

"By starting your medications early, you’re less likely to have a snowball effect with your symptoms."

Know Your OTC Meds

Three main kinds of over-the-counter medications are used to help control seasonal allergies: topical nasal sprays, inhaled corticosteroids, and antihistamines; oral antihistamines; and decongestants.

If you have mild seasonal allergies, nasal sprays and inhalants and oral OTC antihistamines can both effectively manage your symptoms. Despite what you might have heard, antihistamines are not addictive, although they can lose some of their effectiveness over a few months.

If your symptoms are not controlled, consider switching brands or periodic use to make sure your medication is still packing the greatest punch. You may want to buy the kind that read “nonsedating” on the label (unless you’re planning to go straight to bed after taking them).

Sublett doesn’t advise using OTC decongestants for allergies, although many people do. "They’re designed for use with a cold, for seven days or less, while allergies last for weeks," Sublett explains. "They work by reducing the blood flow to your nose, letting you breathe better."

However, nasal decongestants should be taken on a short-term basis only. If used for more than a week, a disorder called rhinitis medicamentosa may occur, where rebound nasal congestion (when congestion returns and gets worse) occurs each time the medication wears off.

Also, oral decongestants can cause significant side effects, including an elevation in blood pressure, nervousness, and sometimes heart palpitations. If you have high blood pressure, glaucoma, or heart conditions, talk to your doctor first before trying decongestants.

Control Your Environment

You don’t want to have to stay indoors on a beautiful day just because you have allergies. But if you’re going to be working outside, consider wearing a protective allergy face mask for tasks like mowing the grass, raking leaves, or washing the car. Depending on how severe your allergies are, you can buy a simple disposable paper mask or a more long-lasting “respirator mask” with a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.

Remember Sublett’s advice about starting allergy medications early in the season so your allergic response doesn’t get out of control: That applies to your daily life as well. If you’re working outside in the afternoon, take your allergy medication at lunch so it will have a chance to get into your system before the pollen does.

"Keep an eye on the pollen counts, and try to plan more of your outdoor work for the afternoon, take your allergy medication at lunch so it will have a chance to get into your system before the pollen does."

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If you have osteoporosis, like me, calcium-rich foods, vitamin D, and exercise can help. But they may not be enough to keep your bones strong. So ask your doctor if once-monthly BONIVA can help you do more.

BONIVA is a prescription medication to treat and prevent postmenopausal osteoporosis. Ask your doctor if BONIVA is right for you.

Important Safety Information: You should not take BONIVA if you have certain problems with your esophagus (the tube that connects your mouth and stomach), low blood calcium, cannot sit or stand for at least 60 minutes, have severe kidney disease, or are allergic to BONIVA. Stop taking BONIVA and tell your doctor right away if you experience:
- difficult or painful swallowing, chest pain, or severe or continuing heartburn, as these may be signs of serious upper digestive problems. Follow the dosing instructions for once-monthly BONIVA carefully to lower the chance of these events occurring. Side effects may include diarrhea, pain in the arms or legs, or upset stomach. Tell your doctor and dentist about all the medicines you take. Tell them if you develop jaw problems (especially following a dental procedure) or severe bone, joint, and/or muscle pain. Your doctor may also recommend a calcium and vitamin D supplement.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please read Patient Information on the next page.

Enroll today. Call 1-888-434-6193 or visit BONIVAfreetrial.com and try BONIVA free.

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Enroll today. Call 1-888-434-6193 or visit BONIVAfreetrial.com and try BONIVA free.
Before you start BONIVA.

To minimize the allergens circulating throughout your house, get a high-efficiency furnace filter (MERP level 11 or 12 is what you’re looking for), and be sure to change it every spring and again in early summer—for example, in March and June. You can also cut down on circulating allergens by using a HEPA filter on your vacuum and getting a HEPA air filter.

And when you’re in the car, keep the windows shut and set your ventilation to recirculate. “Studies show that recirculating air through the car’s cabin filter can help with allergies,” Sublett says.

One “do’s” for coping with allergies indoors: vaporizers and humidifiers. “The droplets are so big that they don’t get into your nose,” and increasing the humidity in your home can lead to problems with mold and dust mites,” says Sublett.

Consider Natural Remedies

Some natural remedies do help with allergy symptoms, but keep in mind that they have their limits. One popular tool is the neti pot, which flushes out your nasal cavities by using gravity to rinse them with a saline solution. Studies show that neti pots are effective for minimizing seasonal allergy symptoms.

“They definitely help if you’re congested and symptomatic,” Sublett says. “But they’re just rinsing the mucus and irritants out of your nose. They’re not actually removing the pollen, which is causing the symptoms in the first place.”

The jury is still out on acupuncture. Some swear by it as an allergy remedy, but the evidence say that a large, randomized clinical trial is needed to resolve the conflicting data.

Don’t Suffer in Silence

If the latest batch of OTC antihistamines in your medicine cabinet isn’t doing the trick, visit an allergist to bring relief.

An allergist will help you determine precisely what you’re allergic to by discussing your symptoms and doing skin tests, which involve exposing you to a small amount of an allergen through a skin abrasion to see if you react. Allergists can also test for antibodies in your blood that can signal the presence of allergens. Your allergist might ask you to keep an “allergy diary,” tracking when and where you have allergic reactions.

Several prescription allergy medications are available:

- Antihistamines
- Leukotriene modifiers, which work by blocking the action of inflammatory chemicals known as leukotrienes, which are released when your body is exposed to allergens.

Intranasal antihistamines, which are fast-acting and work better than oral antihistamines to control congestion.

Antihistamine eye drops, which can reduce the redness, swelling, itching, and watereyness that often go hand-in-hand with seasonal allergies. Eye drops with anti-inflammatory agents may help as well. Corticosteroid eye drops have an anti-inflammatory effect but can cause significant side effects and should be used under the supervision of a doctor.

“Eye symptoms can really make you miserable,” Sublett says. “People often don’t really appreciate the importance of good prescription eye drops.” But, he adds, some eye drops cannot be used with contact lenses.

“The take-home message this allergy season is to be smart. You don’t have to be miserable,” Sublett says. “See an allergist, find out exactly what you’re allergic to, and develop a plan.”

Allergy Shot Basics

About half of people with seasonal allergies say they do fine with over-the-counter medication, according to allergy specialist James Sublett, MD, FACAAI. The other half have moderate to severe allergies that may often leave them impaired—missing work, missing school, or showing up but barely functioning. Some people are helped by prescription medications, but many could benefit from allergy shots, Sublett says.

Immunotherapy for allergies—commonly known as “allergy shots”—works by exposing the immune system to small amounts of an allergen. Over time and in increasingly larger doses, the body learns not to see it as a foreign invader and develops a tolerance to it. If neither OTC nor prescription medications do the trick, and you’re suffering miserably through spring, fall, or both, then allergy shots may be the answer for you.

When allergy shots were first developed (they’ve been around since the mid-20th century), the process took years to be fully effective. But today, you can begin allergy shots in January and have a good chance that your symptoms will be significantly decreased, if not eliminated, by the time the first tulips peek out in April.

Clustering is an even more aggressive approach. It takes more of your time at the outset, but you can build up to full effectiveness within just four to five weeks. “Two times a week, you’ll come in to the allergist’s office for a couple of hours. You get one shot, and then wait, and then get another shot later in the visit,” says Sublett.

No matter which approach you take, once you reach the maintenance level with allergy shots—that is, you’ve built up a tolerance to your allergens, and your symptoms have become minimal—your allergist will gradually decrease the frequency of your injections. Ultimately, you’ll need only once every month throughout the year, and after a few years you may even be able to discontinue them altogether without having your allergies return.

Want to know more?

This summary is not everything you need to know about BONIVA. It does not take the place of talking with your health care provider about your condition or treatment. For more complete information, talk to your health care provider or pharmacist.

Visit myboniva.com or call 1-888-MYBONIVA for the complete Prescribing Information, which includes the Patient Information.
HEPA clean. You can vacuum till your fingers turn blue, but if you don’t have a HEPA-armed vacuum cleaner you’re just blowing dust in the wind. An acronym for high efficiency particulate air, HEPA filters have a well-deserved reputation as green-worthy. “HEPA filters basically suck air in and clean it out,” says Darryl Zeldin, MD, clinical director at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. “They pull allergens like pet dander, mold, and fungi out of the air and trap them in an exhaust system rather than blowing them back into your living environment.”

You can retrofit your vacuum with a HEPA-designated filter. Or if you’re buying a new vacuum, look for a certified HEPA vacuum with a minimum efficiency of 99.97% at a particle size of 0.3 microns.

Humidity be gone. Dehumidifiers are a home’s best friend when it comes to minimizing mildew, mold, and dust mites. “You want to keep your humidity levels in your home below 50%,” says Zeldin. “Dehumidifiers are an inexpensive way to lower your allergen and exposure levels to molds and dust mites.” So along with purchasing a dehumidifier, test the air moisture levels in your home with a humidity sensor, and shoot for that 50% mark.

Your home is where your health begins, so making your living environment as green as possible can only mean good things for your mind and body. Our living spaces, the air we breathe, and our yards offer numerous ways to make eco-friendly and health-conscious choices. Three environmental medicine experts offer tips for how to greenify your home to ensure your family’s well-being.

Mold killer. Finding mold in your bathroom is easy—just look inside your shower or toilet a few days after its last cleaning. Eliminating mold, however, means you need to get creative if you want to be green. “Vinegar is naturally acidic,” says William Rea, MD, a thoracic and cardiovascular surgeon and environmental medicine expert at the Environmental Health Center in Dallas. “And acid is the key to getting rid of mold and other fungi that grow in humid environments like bathrooms.” Vinegar straight-up at 5% concentration—the kind you can purchase at the grocery store—with no water added, is a natural mold killer. Better yet, it earns bonus points for killing bacteria and germs as well as fuzzy fungi.

Your air

While you might take the air you breathe for granted, it is a golden opportunity to go greener. In fact, taking clean air action is a must when you’re improving your home to improve your health.

Potted plants take in toxins and give out oxygen, which is a natural way to purify the air.

By Heather Hatfield
WebMD Contributing Writer

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

your home

From the kitchen to the carpeting, most homes can be made more eco-friendly and healthy for every member of the family.

Your home is where your health begins, so making your living environment as green as possible can only mean good things for your mind and body. Our living spaces, the air we breathe, and our yards offer numerous ways to make eco-friendly and health-conscious choices. Three environmental medicine experts offer tips for how to greenify your home to ensure your family’s well-being.

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Potted plants take in toxins and give out oxygen, which is a natural way to purify the air.
Go green—literally. Placing houseplants around your home is just about as green as it gets when you’re going green. “Potted plants take in toxins and give off oxygen, which is a natural way to purify the air you breathe,” says Toni Bark, MD, a medical consultant and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-accredited professional at the Center for Disease Prevention and Reversal in Evanston, Ill. According to research funded by NASA, plants like the butterfly palm, go green is an easy recipe to follow, and most of the ingredients you’ll need are already in your kitchen cabinets. Here’s a sample of cleaning products you can make at home, from the book Healthy Child Healthy World: Creating a Cleaner, Greener, Safer Home by Christopher Gavigan.

Drain do’s. While harsh drain chemicals work magic on clogged drains, so can a simple solution of 1 cup baking soda poured into the sink or tub, followed by 1 cup vinegar. After some bubbling and fizzing, your drain should be flowing freely. Clean concoction. A simple mixture of 1/2 teaspoon washing soda (sodium carbonate) and 1/2 teaspoon liquid Castile (vegetable-, not animal-based) soap mixed with 2 cups hot water in a 16-ounce spray bottle makes for an all-natural, all-purpose cleaner that can be used on most surfaces.

Mold management. After donning gloves and a mask so you don’t inhale spores, eliminate mold by spraying with vinegar at 5% concentration, or by scrubbing with a non-ammonia detergent such as borax, hydrogen peroxide, or tea tree oil.

Fresh scent. For a lemon-fresh smell to deodorize the air, mix 1 teaspoon baking soda with 1 teaspoon lemon juice and 2 cups hot water in a spray bottle. Spritz and savour.

Dog gone. You don’t need a pesticide to kill the pesky fleas on your dog. Instead, wash him with 1/4 teaspoon of an essential oil that is insect-repelling, such as citronella, cedarwood, eucalyptus, rosemary, or bay leaf, with 1 teaspoon of a chemical-free shampoo and 1 cup water. Pour it over your pet, let it dry a little, then rinse.

Buffed to shine. Two cups of olive oil and one juiced lemon in a glass makes for a natural furniture oil. After testing on a small section of your favorite furniture, apply with a soft polishing cloth and buff to a shine.—HH

How are you going green? Find tips in our Health eHome center.

DIY green-cleaning solutions

Grounds for improvement. Coffee grounds are a little-known wonder for enriching the soil and fertilizing your flowers. According to Bark, the grounds are filled with nutrients like nitrogen that plants love.

So the next time you brew a pot of coffee, just toss the grounds into your compost pile and sprinkle the nutrient-rich mixture right on top of your flower beds before watering, about once a week. It’s an excellent way to boost your garden and recycle waste, Bark says, without any chemical fertilizers.

Go green—literally. Placing houseplants around your home is just about as green as it gets when you’re going green. “Potted plants take in toxins and give off oxygen, which is a natural way to purify the air you breathe,” says Toni Bark, MD, a medical consultant and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-accredited professional at the Center for Disease Prevention and Reversal in Evanston, Ill. According to research funded by NASA, plants like the butterfly palm, go green is an easy recipe to follow, and most of the ingredients you’ll need are already in your kitchen cabinets. Here’s a sample of cleaning products you can make at home, from the book Healthy Child Healthy World: Creating a Cleaner, Greener, Safer Home by Christopher Gavigan.

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Green and Clean

Expert product picks for greening your home

It’s easy being green, especially when you get some pointers from William Rea, MD, founder of the Environmental Health Center in Dallas, and Toni Bark, MD, an environmental expert in Evanston, Ill., who is certified in healthy eco-living with a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) designation.

They know phrases like phosphate- and chlorine-free on the label are good when it comes to buying products that are better for your body. Even easier, look for green “stamps” that designate a product has eco- and body-friendly attributes, like chemical-free or organic, such as the “Green Seal” of approval, the A-OK from Green Seal, an independent nonprofit that certifies products and services that are greener and healthier. Here’s what Rea and Bark stock their cabinets with to keep their homes as clean as green can get.—Heather Hatfield

BATHROOM STAPLES

Heinz Distilled White Vinegar is all-natural, made from corn and water. Its 5% acidity is where the product gets its mold-fighting power, making it a good bathroom staple. ($2.19/32 ounces)

Biokleen Super Concentrated All Purpose Cleaner & Degreaser works in every room in the house, says Bark, including the bathroom, without harsh chemicals and fumes that can be released with steam when you hit a hot shower. ($5.75/16 ounces)

Dr. Bronner’s Sal Suds Liquid Cleaner contains natural ingredients such as fir pine oil, and biodegrades after it dries. ($11.59/32 ounces)

KITCHEN CLEANERS

Bon Ami Powder Cleanser is an oldie but goodie. First produced in 1886, it’s still used today for scrubbing away grease and grime using all-natural ingredients like the mineral feldspar, limestone, and palm oils, Bark says. ($3.29/14 ounces)

Green Works Natural Dishwashing Liquid is made with plant-based, biodegradable ingredients and has no harsh chemical fumes. ($3.29/22 ounces)

Seventh Generation Natural Automatic Dishwasher Gel is made of lemon, grapefruit, and other natural ingredients, says Rea, to help keep your dishes clean and your air chlorine-free. ($3.99/42 ounces)

Mrs. Meyer’s Clean Day Liquid Dish Soap comes in Sebastian scents, including basil, lavender, and lemon verbena—with no toxins such as ammonia and chlorine. ($3.99/16 ounces)

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.
We spend (or should spend) about one-third of our life asleep. But sleep can be something of a mystery to most of us. “I have no problem getting to sleep at night,” macinthehouse writes in our sleep disorders community. “The problem is that when I wake up in the night, my mind starts racing and I often can’t fall back to sleep for several hours. Is this a medical condition?” It could be, so talk to your doctor and test your sleep smarts with this quiz.

1. Which age group needs the most sleep?
   - Newborns
   - Infants (up to age 2)
   - Teens
   - Adults
   - Older adults (aged 65 and up)

2. During a 24-hour period, people feel sleepy
   - Once
   - Twice
   - Four times
   - Six times

3. Which of these problems can result from too little sleep?
   - Decreased immune response
   - Depression
   - Impaired memory and thinking
   - Weight gain or difficulty losing weight
   - All of the above

4. Most health experts recognize these many sleep disorders:
   - 20
   - 65
   - 88
   - 125

**Answers:** 1. Newborns need about 16 to 17 hours of sleep daily; infants need 14 to 15.5 hours; teens need about 9; and most adults need 7 to 9, according to the American Sleep Association. 2. People tend to feel sleepy twice during a 24-hour period, usually between midnight and 7 a.m. and between 1 and 4 p.m. 3. A good night’s sleep helps you think clearly and solve problems, stay off depression, recover from illness, and, recent research suggests, maintain a healthy weight. 4. There are 88 sleep disorders that can cause trouble with falling asleep or staying asleep.

Source: NIH and the HalO Pain Disorders Health Center

ID LIKE TO 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?
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?

**GET THE 411: PAIN**

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

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 worldwide network of the nation’s top MS research centers.
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. But we know it’s not easy. “I am glad to hear you have cut out a lot of the unhealthy foods and soda,” Diane R01 tells another member of WebMD’s diabetes community. “You have taken a step in the right direction. Congratulations on quitting smoking! You have a great victory there.” But, she adds, “You still need to work on your weight. Have you worked with a dietitian to put together an eating plan that works for you?” How well are you keeping your own diabetes in control?

1. I follow my diabetes food plan:
   - Every day
   - Most days
   - What food plan?

2. I check my feet for cuts and sores:
   - Very often
   - Rarely
   - 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.

Diabetes control

DID YOU KNOW?

Blood glucose levels should be between 80 and 120 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?

GET THE 411: DIABETES

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

**Is It Your Kid Overweight?**

Is it baby fat or a real problem? Only your child’s doctor can say for sure. But if you’re worried about your child being (or becoming) overweight, it may be time to reflect on your parenting style. “About one-third of the kids I see are medically overweight,” says Roy Benaroch, MD, one of WebMD’s parenting experts. “Many of these children will remain overweight as adults, and many will suffer from psychological and medical problems as a direct result.” There are no easy fixes, he adds, but a few changes can make a big difference in your child’s health. For instance:

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 promote overeating?
   - Yes
   - No

3. Do you avoid rewarding your child with food?
   - Yes
   - No

4. Do you plan fun forms of exercise, such as bike riding, dancing, or swimming?
   - Yes
   - No

**Quiz Answers:**

1.  
   - 1. Yes
   - 2. Yes
   - 3. No
   - 4. No

**Get the 411: Diet**

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

Source: NIH, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the WebMD Health & Parenting Center

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**Allergies**

**What Are Food Allergies?**

Any number of foods can trigger an allergic reaction, with varying symptoms. “I have a 5-year-old who has just been diagnosed with cow’s milk, egg white, and shrimp allergies,” blossomrose recently wrote in WebMD’s allergies community. “What are the symptoms of allergies? I know the rashes, hives, cannot breathe, but can hyperactivity be part of the allergic reaction?” What do you think? How much do you know about food allergies?

1. Which of the following foods commonly cause allergic reactions in kids?
   - a. eggs
   - b. milk
   - c. peanuts
   - d. all of the above

2. Which body system sets off an allergic reaction?
   - a. immune
   - b. respiratory
   - c. gastrointestinal
   - d. nervous

3. Food allergies do not usually trigger this symptom:
   - a. itchy mouth
   - b. hyperactivity
   - c. nausea and vomiting
   - d. hives or eczema

**Quiz Answers:**

1. d. Eight foods account for 90% of all food allergy reactions: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, wheat, shellfish, and fish.
2. a. Normally, your immune system rushes to defend your body against harmful substances, such as viruses, bacteria, and toxins. A food allergy will also trigger an exaggerated immune response. Reactions range from mild to very severe.
3. b. Hyperactivity is not a symptom. Symptoms of food allergies usually occur on the skin and include itching; hives; and swelling of the eyelids, face, lips, or tongue. Digestive symptoms can include cramps, vomiting, and diarrhea. Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, dizziness, and loss of consciousness could signal a more serious allergic reaction requiring immediate care (call 911).

**Get the 411: Allergies**

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

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; NIH; the FDA; the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology; and the WebMD Allergy Health Center
Gynecologists, and the

Source: NIH, the American Cancer Society, the American College of Obstetricians and

them. Get regular gynecological checkups and Pap tests.

That hormones in the pill affect cervical cells in a way that helps HPV enter

is that women on the pill don’t take other safe sex measures. Another is

been linked to both a higher risk of HPV and cervical cancer. One theory

Taking oral contraceptives for more than five years has also

to cancer.

5. Smoking cigarettes has been linked to changes in the cervix that can lead

ous chlamydia infection increases a woman’s risk of cervical cancer.

4. Having multiple sexual partners increases your risk of contracting HPV, the major risk

Human papilloma virus (HPV) infection?

Multiple sexual partners?

Chlamydia (an STD that doesn’t always have symptoms)?

Cigarette smoking?

Oral contraceptives?

Answers: If you answered “yes” to any of the above questions, you may be at higher risk for cervical cancer. 1. HPV, a sexually transmitted disease, is by far the major risk factor for cervical cancer. The virus has been found in 99% of cervical cancer biopsy specimens taken worldwide. 2. Having multiple sexual partners increases your risk of contracting HPV, the major risk factor for cervical cancer. Several studies show that a current or previous chlamydia infection increases a woman’s risk of cervical cancer. 3. Smoking cigarettes has been linked to changes in the cervix that can lead to cancer. 4. Smoking cigarettes has been linked to changes in the cervix that can lead to cancer. One theory is that women on the pill don’t take other safe sex measures. Another is that hormones in the pill affect cervical cells in a way that helps HPV enter them. Get regular gynecological checkups and Pap tests.

Sign up for the latest news and lifestyle management tips—delivered directly to your email inbox! Go to WebMD.com and search for "cancer newsletter."

Did you know?

Since its debut in 1941, the Pap test has decreased U.S. cervical cancer death rates by an estimated 70%.

Answers:

1. A healthy blood pressure for an adult is 140/90.

2. You have HBP if you have these symptoms: blurry vision, chest pains, or headache.

3. Cutting back on salty snacks and foods is all you need to do to lower HBP.

4. The only way to know if you have HBP is to have your blood pressure checked.

4. False. While reducing sodium can help, other lifestyle changes are usually necessary, such as losing weight, stopping smoking, eating healthy foods, and getting enough exercise. 4. True. Be sure to get your blood pressure checked regularly, especially if you have a close relative who has HBP.

Source: American Heart Association and the WebMD Hypertension Health Center
Many moms have a brief, mild bout of the “baby blues” after delivery. But some new moms develop a more intense medical condition called postpartum depression. “I thought I had the baby blues at first, with the stress of my bf working 3rd shift and me being pretty much alone with the baby all night and all day,” ssf10 wrote recently in Baby’s First Year, a WebMD community. “But it’s not going away. I still cry often, and I hardly see or talk to anyone anymore. I feel very overwhelmed by it all, especially doing it alone.” About 10% of new mothers develop PPD. Are you at risk?

1. Have you ever been diagnosed with depression unrelated to pregnancy?
   - Yes
   - No

2. Do you have a family history of depression?
   - Yes
   - No

3. Did something stressful happen during your pregnancy, such as a death of a friend or relative?
   - Yes
   - No

4. Are you facing life stresses, such as marriage or financial problems?
   - Yes
   - No

Questions for Your Doctor

1. How do I know if I am at risk for postpartum depression (PPD)?
2. If I develop PPD, what treatments—medication, counseling, or support groups—can help me?
3. What can my partner or family members do to help me?
4. What are the warning signs that I need immediate medical help?

What did you learn from your sister’s illness?

That you can live your life as a quote-unquote healthy person and have it all suddenly taken away from you. All that you took for granted, all the obvious, everyday things, they become so much more important... The best medicine outside of a cure is the love of your loved ones. It was my sister who was sick. I can only imagine it as a lonely scenario. You can’t take away the pain, but you can make them as comfortable as possible. Keep positive; it’s the only thing you can do.

Did you know?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you’re at increased risk for postpartum depression, an illness that can strike anytime up to a year after you give birth. While the baby blues fade on their own—usually within 10 days after delivery—postpartum depression is more serious and lasting. Left untreated, it can become disabling. Symptoms include sadness, anxiety, mood swings, and feelings of guilt or worthlessness. You may worry about hurting yourself or your baby. You may also cry often and have less energy and motivation. Talk with your doctor about getting care—not just for your sake, but your child’s, too.

Source: NHM, American Academy of Family Physicians, and the WebMD Depression Health Center

Get the 411: Mind

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

DID YOU KNOW?

If you’ve already had one episode of postpartum depression, you face a 50% chance of getting it again with later pregnancies.

WebMD Checkup

WebMD.com

Nelly Rap Artist

You really don’t need an introduction, do you? In the past decade, you’ve recorded some of rap’s most popular records, you’ve won three Grammy awards, and you have six studio albums under your belt. Your latest, 5.0, hit the charts four months ago. However, you do some of your most important work outside the music field. In 2003, you and your older sister, Jackie Donahue, who died of leukemia, founded Jes Us 4 Jackie. How did the campaign get started?

When we first started, we were trying to find a bone marrow donor for my sister. It didn’t happen. But I hope to save somebody else’s sister someday.

One of the goals of this campaign is to educate minorities about the importance of bone marrow and stem cell transplant donations and to encourage them to sign up for the donor registry. How do you do that? Is it hard to convince people to register?

We’ve held bone marrow drives in New York and Los Angeles at the same time, in urban communities. A lot of people think donating is going to be dangerous, that it’s going to take weeks to recover, but it only takes a couple of hours. You’re in and out quickly.

You’re now 36. With so much to do, how do you stay fit?

If I’m not in album-making mode, I work out five times a week. In album mode, it’s rough finding the time. But I always play basketball. Basketball is the best for cardio. It’s better than a treadmill, better than running. It’s about fun and cardio and hooping with the boys. You release stress, you channel your stress into the game.

What’s your best health habit?

My best health habit is going to the gym, even when there are a million excuses not to go.

What’s your worst health habit?

My eating habits. I can get away with a lot, because I’ve been blessed with a great metabolism. As a kid, I was skinny. I only got large from lifting weights. I know it gets harder to keep off the weight as you get older, but as a child I always needed to gain weight.

Name one of your guilty pleasures.

Waking up at 3 a.m. and eating chocolate mousse and ice cream.

You have two kids, Chanell Haynes, 17, and Cornell Haynes III, 12, and adopted your sister’s kids. What has being a father taught you?

It’s taught me to appreciate smaller, everyday pleasures, like just hanging out with them. I know they like my success, but there’s a bitter side to it, too, because I’m not there as much as they want me to be.

Is your name on the donor registry?

I’ve signed up. Hopefully, I will get a call and be able to save someone.—Matt McMillen

Did you know?

Did you know you’ll lose 5% of your muscle mass each decade as you get older? But as a child I always needed to gain weight.
DID YOU KNOW?
WebMD also provides tips and tools to keep your pet healthy!

INSIDE
HealthyPets
you’ll find:

• Information on pet symptoms and conditions
• Tried and tested solutions to pet behavior problems
• From recalls to new medications – the latest pet health news
• Ask a Vet: Access experts in our WebMD Pet Health Community

For Dog Lovers
For Cat Lovers

Cat’s meow
Decode your feline’s feelings

Scare tactics
Help your dog deal with fear

Puppy love
Isabella Rossellini taps into her animal instincts on-screen and off
Q: My cat is prone to coughing up hairballs. What are they, and can I do anything about them?

A: Hairballs, technically called trichobezoars, develop as a result of your cat’s healthy and fastidious grooming routine. Tiny hook-like structures on his tongue catch loose and dead hair, which is then swallowed. The majority of this hair passes all the way through the digestive tract with no problems. But if some hair stays in the stomach, it can form a hairball. Ultimately, your cat may vomit the hairball to get rid of it.

Here are a few things you can do to reduce the likelihood your cat will have hairballs or to cut down on their frequency.

- **Groom your cat regularly.** The more fur you remove from your cat, the less fur that will end up as fodder for hairballs in her stomach. Combing or brushing your cat on a daily basis can be an effective way to minimize hairballs. If you can’t get your cat accustomed to grooming or brushing, think about taking her to a professional groomer for a grooming and haircut (especially for long-haired cats) every six months or so.

- **Use a hairball product or laxative.** There are a number of hairball products on the market today, most of which are mild laxatives that help hairballs pass through the digestive tract.

- **Try a “hairball formula” cat food.** Many pet food manufacturers now make hairball-reduction cat foods. These high-fiber formulas are designed to improve the health of your cat’s coat, minimize the amount of shedding, and encourage hairballs to pass through your cat’s digestive system.

Q: How can I get my dog to stop barking so much?

A: Training your dog to bark less will take work, practice, and consistency. It won’t happen overnight, but with proper techniques and time, you can see progress. Here are a few tips.

- **Don’t bark.** Shouting stimulates your dog to bark more because he thinks you’re joining in. So the first rule is to speak calmly and firmly, but don’t yell.

- **Silence is golden.** Most dogs don’t know what you want when you’re yelling at them to “shut up.” So train your dog to understand the word “quiet.” Here are two methods:
  - When your dog is barking, say “quiet” in a calm, firm voice. Wait until he stops barking, even if it’s just to take a breath, then praise him and give him a treat. Just be careful never to reward him while he’s barking. Eventually he will figure out that if he stops barking at the word quiet, he gets a treat (and make it a high-value treat, such as cheese or chicken bits).
  - Alternatively, you can teach your dog to “speak.” Then once he’s doing that reliably, signal him to stop barking with a different command, such as “quiet,” while holding your finger to your lips (dogs often pick up body signals faster than voice commands).

Practice these commands when he’s calm, and in time he should learn to stop barking at your command, even when he wants to bark at something.
Isabella Rossellini has played a nightclub singer (Blue Velvet), a legless beer baroness (The Saddest Music in the World), and even a cuttlefish (in her Seduce Me shorts for the Sundance Channel). But what she’d really like to do is get inside the head of animals, which is precisely what happens in Animals Distract Me, a film that premiered at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival Animals Distract Me to explain how over time, wileless pets become our household pets.

Rossellini, 59, is the director, star, and writer of her newest project, which follows her and a poodle named Sweety through a day in Manhattan. While Rossellini discusses a fashion exhibit with Vogue editor André Leon Talley, attends a shoot with star photographer Fabrizio Ferri, and lunches with chef Mario Batali, she becomes preoccupied by the animals around her. “Even though I’m in an urban environment, I keep on going to animals, whether it’s a dog or crickets or pigeons or cockroaches, and with each animal [I notice] there is a little vignette,” Rossellini says. The movie shows scenes first through the eyes of a human and then from the point of view of an animal, such as her former guide dog, Sweety. She even introduces puppet characters, including one based on Charles Darwin (actually played by Rossellini with a voiceover by Campbell Scott) to help educate the audience about animal behavior.

By Melanie D.G. Kaplan and Chloe Thompson
WebMD contributing writers

Exploring the world with a camera is natural for the legendary actress and model, who grew up in the spotlight. She is perhaps best known for her famous lineage, as the daughter of actress Ingrid Bergman and Italian director Roberto Rossellini, and for being the face of Lancôme for nearly 15 years. In addition to directing, Rossellini maintains a full acting schedule. She recently shot Late Bloomers, a romantic comedy with William Hurt, and Chocolat Flats, a new film by Marjane Satrapi, the Iranian director of Persepolis. Her Seduce Me shorts about animal courtship were released last year, following on the heels of her award-winning 2008 Green Porno series, about the mating life of animals.

Rounding out her busy schedule is a role she’s taken in recent years, away from the limelight: training Labrador puppies for the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind (guidedog.org). Rossellini and her friend, actress Linda Larkin (best known as the voice of Princess Jasmine in Aladdin), live with and train one pup per year. They split custody between their Manhattan apartments and Rossellini’s Long Island home. This exposes the dogs to noise and traffic in the city (where they encounter crosswalks and taxis) and wild-life in the country (where they learn not to chase birds and fight with cats). To date, they have raised eight guide dogs. Bas, a 6-month-old black Lab, is Rossellini’s newest puppy in training, since Sweety finished her schooling last year.

Rossellini has had dogs all her life, and nearly every dog she’s encountered has a fascinating story. “My mama gave me my first dog, a white Maltese calledTupe,” Rossellini says. “She ran off and came back pregnant. We gave away the puppies, and she was so desperate that night, searching for her babies. The night after, we found a little black cat meowing for its mother in the street. We rescued the cat. The dog nursed the cat and was convinced it was her baby. She was so proud her baby could climb trees and do things other dogs couldn’t.”

Rossellini’s next dog was a dachshund named Nando who was with her for nearly 20 years. After meeting the Jack Russell terrier of director (and one-time boyfriend) David Lynch while filming Blue Velvet, she got her own Jack Russell named Macaroni, who died a few years ago. “After that, I thought, I can’t go through another death,” she says. But now, she says, working with guide dogs connects her to the entire life cycle—including helping whelp puppies every summer. “It is the drama of life,” she says. “It’s inevitable that they die, but it’s so painful.”

But if she can help it, drama-free is how Rossellini likes to keep her daily activities, including playtime with the pups. “I don’t think life is as fun without a dog,” she says. “I cannot say that they cure my flu or my headaches, but for sure they give me a great sense of companionship, and they’re entertaining. [When they’re not there] you miss the little circus they always bring.”

Rossellini dresses up as Charles Darwin in Animals Distract Me to explain how over time, wileless pets became our household pets.
What is your cat thinking? His body language may give it away. Cats use a variety of signals (body postures, facial expressions, and vocalizations) to convey their message and avoid unwelcome confrontations. By learning how to decipher these feline postures, you can deepen the bonds of affection with your cat—and prevent misunderstandings and potential aggression.

1 Tummy Display
Feline body language is more nuanced than that of dogs, says Karen Sueda, DVM, Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists. “Part of the problem arises when people take their knowledge of dogs and apply it to cats,” says Sueda, who works at the VCA West Los Angeles Animal Hospital.

Have you ever wondered, for example, why your cat’s seemingly flirtatious behavior of rolling over to expose his belly may turn to overt aggression when you try to stroke him? When your cat is content and relaxed, he may stretch out and roll over. But in other situations, when a cat feels cornered and cannot escape, this pose may be highly defensive, indicating she is prepared to fight—with fully extended claws and sharp teeth, says Pam Johnson-Bennett, a certified animal behavior consultant in Nashville, Tenn.

2 The Fluttering Blink
When a cat greets another cat or a person with slow, languid blinks, it’s communicating affection. Why? Because in the feline world, to close one’s eyes in the presence of another is the ultimate sign of trust.

By blinking slowly at your cat, you are communicating that you are aware of its presence and pose no threat. So the next time your cat blinks at you, return the gesture.

3 Tall Tales
One of the most accurate barometers of a cat’s mood is its tail. When held high, it communicates confidence. Curled around another cat’s tail or human legs, it signals friendliness. And tucked below or between the legs, it signals insecurity or anxiousness.

The upright bottle-brush tail is an unequivocal sign your cat is feeling threatened. And when combined with the arched back, upright hair along the spine, and unsheathed claws, this stance is a dead giveaway that you should back off, Sueda says.

4 The Direct Stare
Although people can use direct eye contact to show affection, most cats find it threatening. That’s why in social settings, a cat usually gravitates toward the one person in the room who is trying to ignore it.

The more fearful a cat becomes, the wider its pupils expand, says Myrna Milani, DVM, a veterinary ethologist (animal behaviorist) at Tipping Point Animal Behavior Consulting Services in Charlestown, N.H. When dilated and wide open, the pupils take in as much visual information as possible. This bug-eyed, saucer look signals that a cat is frightened and wants to retreat.

In an aroused or angry cat, the pupils may become narrowed to focus more effectively on detail. But cats’ eyes also respond to ambient lighting, Sueda says, so it is important to observe the body language as a whole.

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Is your dog terrified of everything? Help your pooch fight fear with these expert tips

Dee Seiffer was charmed when she spotted a 6-month-old English cocker spaniel at a shelter. The Milford, Conn., resident adopted the adorable stray, but right after little Ruby came home, she began showing signs of fear and aggression.

“She was afraid of everybody and everything. She was afraid of garbage cans, parked cars—she was terrified of a parked truck,” Seiffer says. “She was so cute that people wanted to walk right up to her and pet her. She would go backward, with her eyes as big as saucers, and bark and shake and hide behind me.”

Seiffer knew that fearful dogs can progress from growling and bristling to snapping and biting, so she turned to dog behavior experts for help. In fact, fear and aggression are top behavior problems of pet dogs, according to veterinarians who specialize in animal behavior. What can owners do?

Learn to recognize when your dog is fearful. “There’s a world of dog body language that the majority of dog owners have no clue about,” says Lisa Radosta, DVM, DACVB, a veterinarian at the Florida Veterinary Behavior Service in Royal Palm Beach, Fla.

Fear, anxiety, and stress look like “retreat,” she says. “Retreat doesn’t always mean running away. It can be crouching down, moving backward, trying to make your body small. It can mean the face and head are the only things that retreat. Sometimes, it means the head goes down or flexes toward one shoulder, or the eyes avert down.”

“Read what your dog is trying to tell you,” says Bonnie Beaver, DVM, DACVB, MS, past president of the American Veterinary Medical Association and a professor of veterinary medicine at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. Too often, owners do the opposite. “The dog doesn’t want to go, it holds back on the leash, so what do we do? We drag it forward,” she says.

Don’t punish a fearful dog. It’s never a good idea to hit your dog or use negative reinforcement to try to help it overcome fear, experts say. “If your dog’s afraid of you, how could she possibly think you’re going to keep her safe?” Radosta asks.

Instead, “Set up a really good, structured, positive reinforcement relationship with your dog. Teach your dog a trick, then reward it with a tasty treat,” she says. “You’re setting up this paradigm where the dog is looking to you for instruction and reinforcement and starting to view you as ‘safe.’ And that’s the key to changing fear. If the owner is not considered ‘safe’ in the dog’s mind, the dog will try to keep herself safe and that’s how you climb that ladder of aggression.”

Ruby, now 4, went on a brief course of medication to calm her extreme fear. Seiffer also took her on walks to unfamiliar places, to parks and dog classes—all in an effort to provide her the exposure she likely missed as a young puppy.

Although she’s still skittish about strangers touching her, Ruby has overcome lots of her initial fears. When Ruby went on a walk during a recent garbage collection day, Seiffer says, “she walked by scores of garbage cans and didn’t flinch.”

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WebMD Baby

Danica McKellar

The Wonder Years star and math maven on her family’s latest addition

March/April 2011 webmd.com
My baby spits up a lot and also vomits after I feed him. What causes this, what’s normal, and when do I need to worry?

After your baby swallows milk, it glides past the back of the throat into a muscular tube called the esophagus and then into the stomach. Where the stomach and esophagus join, there is a ring of muscle called the lower esophageal sphincter that’s meant to prevent milk and stomach acid from coming up backward into the esophagus. In babies, this sphincter doesn’t always work perfectly. If stomach contents go back up into the esophagus, this is called “reflux.”

Infants are especially prone to reflux. Their stomachs are small, about the size of a golf ball, and the lower esophageal sphincter might not tighten up when it should. And babies will occasionally take in more than they’re ready to handle.

Every baby spits up, or refuxes, occasionally. Some babies may spit up at least a little bit with almost every feeding. For most babies, these spit-ups don’t cause any problems. As long as your baby isn’t very fussy and is growing well, ordinary reflux episodes don’t need any treatment. Typically, the lower esophageal valve tightens up sometime in the first year, and spitting lessens.

Reflux is called gastroesophageal reflux disease or GERD when the spitting up is causing significant problems. GERD symptoms can include pain and fussiness, breathing problems, and poor weight gain. If your baby shows any of these signs, talk to your pediatrician.

What are some common bottle-feeding do’s and don’ts?

The main thing is to engage in lots of trial-and-error to be sure you find a bottle and nipple combination that works for your baby. Don’t stock up on too many of the same kind of bottle unless you know she is going to take it well. When you’re bottle-feeding, make sure milk is filling up the nipple. Otherwise, she could swallow a lot of air. One problem is the way parents position babies: Some lay them completely flat, which can make babies choke when feeding on the bottle. Be sure to have your baby semi-inclined or upright.

Another common mistake is prop-ping the bottle. Don’t prop it—it can be a choking hazard. That is also why you should always be present when your baby is feeding, even when she’s old enough to hold her own bottle. If an infant is going to burp, it will usually happen in the first minute or two after feeding. Still, some parents worry if their baby doesn’t burp, but it’s OK. Some babies just don’t burp very well, and some don’t need to very often. A lot of babies will burp on their own, but for the first few months, most do need a little help.

If your baby hasn’t burped and you feel she needs to, put her in your lap in a sitting position and tap her back gently.
“My goal was to do natural childbirth,” she explains. “But I didn’t know if it would [fully] go that way until the baby was actually born.” McKellar gave birth to her son, Draco—named for a constellation in the sky—“on Labor Day” she says, in a Los Angeles-area hospital under the supervision of a doctor, who happily worked with her doula. “I wanted Western medicine close. I wanted to be prepared, just in case.”

McKellar’s reward, she says, for resisting an epidural (pain medications delivered through a needle inserted into the spinal cord, numbing the spinal nerves that cause feeling in the lower body) was that she was alert and mobile enough to “pull out Draco myself.” When her baby was ready, her doctor invited her to sit up and “come and get him” Reaming, she relates, “It was one of the most amazing moments of my life.”

Natural Selection

McKellar, 36, says she’s a firm believer that “every woman has an inner sense that guides her” when it comes to pregnancy, labor, and breastfeeding, and “that we should never judge another woman’s choices.” She says that a strict approach to nutrition before and after birth, the goal of natural labor, and exclusive breastfeeding for at least six months was right for her.

After a miscarriage in October 2009, McKellar and husband, composer Mike Verta, decided to keep mum when she found herself pregnant again just months later—even when Mom magazine asked her to do a sexy lingerie shoot timed to her son, Draco—named for a constellation in the sky—“on Labor Day.” McKellar gave birth to her son, Draco—named for a constellation in the sky—“on Labor Day.”

McKellar tells WebMD of her 36-hour labor, “I kept thinking about what I tell my readers about their abilities in math, and it resonated with labor, too. You’re more capable than you think you are.”

Which is not to say McKellar didn’t struggle, like many girls do, as they tackle algebraic problems just as puberty hits, as the “brain’s growth spurt,” as she puts it, “is not always in sync with the growth of the body.”

Still acting (McKellar has done TV guest spots on ABC’s How I Met Your Mother and CBS’s The Big Bang Theory, and voices a animated character on a Cartoon Network) even as she celebrates her third best-seller, she’s loving motherhood so much that she and her husband are already planning for baby No. 2.

“The plan is to have them two and a half years apart,” she says, calculating the optimal time between sibling. Which means, if you do the math, she’ll be pregnant again this time next year. Stay tuned.

My Math: Showing Pre-Algebra Who’s Boss; and Hot X: Algebra Exposed. for girls with three best-selling books: Math Doesn’t Suck: How to Survive Middle School Math Without Losing Your Mind or Breaking a Nail; Kiss My Math: Showing Pre-Algebra Who’s Boss; and Hot X: Algebra Exposed. Photography by Cathryn Farnsworth

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“During the toughest moments,” McKellar tells WebMD of her 36-hour labor, “I kept thinking about what I tell my readers about their abilities in math, and it resonated with labor, too: You’re more capable than you think you are.”

Which is not to say McKellar didn’t struggle, like many girls do, as they tackle algebraic problems just as puberty hits, as she rode out one painful contraction after another. She faced moments where she wanted to quit. With the support of her doctor, her husband, and her doula (birth coach) and the practice of self-hypnosis, she got through her long labor.

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Do natural childbirth and the quadratic equation share a common denominator? It just might be Danica McKellar, the former child actress who first stole hearts as Winnie Cooper on the late ’80s hit show The Wonder Years before carving out a new niche as a math advocate for girls with three best-selling books: Math Doesn’t Suck: How to Survive Middle School Math Without Losing Your Mind or Breaking a Nail; Kiss My Math: Showing Pre-Algebra Who’s Boss; and Hot X: Algebra Exposed. By Lauren Paige Kennedy, WebMD Contributing Writer Photography by Cathryn Farnsworth

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Bottle Recap

By Wendy Fries, WebMD Contributing Writer

When it comes to baby bottles, nipples, bibs, and more, the array of choices facing new parents can be confusing: Should you go with glass, plastic, or disposable bottles? Should bottles be BPA-free? Do you need a bottle warmer and sterilizer? We cover the essentials.

**BOTTLES**

Which should you choose? Ask for advice from friends, family, or your baby’s pediat- trician, or try several kinds to see which you and your baby like best. There are three basic choices of baby bottles.

**Glass**

*Pros:* Glass bottles last a long time and can also be deep-cleaned by boiling.

*Cons:* They’re heavier than plastic and may shatter if dropped.

**Plastic**

*Pros:* These are essentially reusable plastic bottles that use a disposable sterilized liner for each feeding. They’re very convenient for quick cleanups.

*Cons:* The disposable inserts may not be environmentally sound, and the bottles are usually more expensive than regular plastic or glass.

**Disposable**

*Pros:* These are essentially reusable plastic bottles that use a disposable sterilized liner for each feeding. They’re very convenient for quick cleanups.

*Cons:* The disposable inserts may not be environmentally sound, and the bottles are usually more expensive than regular plastic or glass.

**Bottles and nipples are just the beginning; babies may show a preference for a certain nipple type. Get started, ask friends, family, and your baby’s doctor which types and brands they like most.**

**Bottle Gear**

Bottles and nipples are just the beginning. Manufacturers offer a big assortment of feeding accessories, from brushes and bottle carrying cases to sterilizers and special dishwasher bottle baskets.

Pediatricians and parents generally agree that it’s helpful to have:

- 1 baby bottle
- 1 baby bottle brush
- 6 to 12 bibs
- 12 burp cloths

How to choose the right one for your baby

**Tips**

Don’t sterilize glass baby bottles and nipples before every use. (That was necessary in the past, when municipal water supplies were not as reliably clean as they are now.) Do, however, sterilize new glass baby bottles and nipples by putting them in boiling water for five minutes.

Do replace a plastic baby bottle if it’s cracked, leaks, is discolored, or smells bad.

Cry Baby

What her wails really mean, and how to soothe her like a pro

By Susan Davis, WebMD Contributing Writer

All babies cry. It’s a basic way of communicating their wants and needs. But for many new parents, a crying baby can be frustrating and heart-rending. Fortunately, parents can do a lot to help their little ones calm down and be happy.

To start, think of your newborn as not entirely ready to be out of the womb. “I believe the key to understanding babies is to recognize that they come into the world three months before they’re fully ready,” says Harvey Karp, MD, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the USC School of Medicine and author of The Happiest Baby on the Block.

“That’s why a big part of soothing your baby—and getting some extra sleep your self—is giving at least three months, a fourth trimester, of extra rocking and touch.”

Once you’re equipped with that perspective, the next step to soothing a fussy baby is figuring out what’s making him or her cry. Learn to recognize these classic signs of gassiness or needing to poop.

- Swallowing, blinking, and drooping eyelids can be signs of fatigue.
- Looking away is often a sign of overstimulation. It means “I need a little break.”
- Frowning, grunting, and straining can be signs of gasiness or needing to poop.

If you’ve ruled out these problems and your baby is still fussy, you may have a more serious issue on your hands.

- Babies who cry loudly for several hours a day may have “colic,” which can start around two weeks of age and end at three or four months. Although associated with abdominal discomfort, “colic” in babies refers simply to daily, extended crying spells (usually for three hours or more). Other symptoms of colic include crying that worsens in the evening, a worried or pinched look on the baby’s face, and crying that starts during or after a meal.
- But even a colicky baby who seems to be screaming in pain can be soothed. Karp notes “Crying doesn’t necessarily spell crisis. The vast majority of fussy babies are just homesick for the ‘5 S’s’ that constantly calm them the womb.”

Here are Karp’s 5 S’s—things you can do to imitate the environment in your womb and trigger your little one’s calming reflexes.

**Swaddling:** Wrapping your baby snugly in a blanket is “the cornerstone of calming,” Karp says. “When the arms are snug and straight, the hips should have some wiggle movement. Newborns are still figureeight movement in the womb. Remember, the womb is ‘as loud as a vacuum,’ Karp notes. Parents can do all they can to soothe, Karp says. ‘And the younger they are, the less prepared their immune systems are to fight off infection. It’s always better to be safe than sorry.’”

**Side or stomach position:** Babies should always sleep on their backs. But to soothe a baby, hold her in your arms either on her stomach or resting on her side.

**Shushing:** White noise can be a baby’s best friend because the noise in the womb is “as loud as a vacuum,” Karp notes. Try making a loud and steady ‘shhhhh’ noise to calm your baby.

**Sucking:** Whether it’s bouncing or something slower, rhythmic motions replicate movement in the womb. Remember to be gentle when using motion to soothe.

When to call the doc

Sometimes crying is a sign of true illness. That’s why a doctor should examine a baby that you just can’t soothe. “Babies don’t have strong immune systems and can get very sick very fast,” Karp says. “And the younger they are, the less prepared their immune systems are to fight off infection. It’s always better to be safe than sorry.”

**Warning signs of illness include:**

- Rectal temperature of 100.4°F or more
- Rash
- Cough, congestion or breathing problems
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Blood in the urine or stool
- Not looking well or not feeding well

**Rash**

- The rash is limited to the buttocks and thighs.
- Rash has a raised border.
- Rash itches.
- Rash appears without fever.

**Rectal temperature**

- Rectal temperature above 100.4°F.
- Fasting, loose or watery, pink or red stools with mucus.
- Diarrhea.
- Blood in stool.

**Vomiting and/or diarrhea**

- Vomiting.
- Diarrhea.
- Blood in stool.
- Fever.

**Cough, congestion or breathing problems**

- Cough.
- Congestion.
- Breathing.”

**Blood in the urine or stool**

- Blood in urine.
- Blood in stool.
- Fever.

**Not looking well or not feeding well**

- Not looking well.
- Not feeding well.

Have a new-parent question? Visit the Health & Baby center.

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**What are the must-have diaper bag essentials?**

- Nappies
- Wipes
- Changing pad
- Baby wipes

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**WebMD MeDICal eDITor**

Louise Chang, MD

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