

May 3, 2009

### A "Bad" Habit That's Good

Here's the rap sheet on gum: It may cause pressure headaches or jaw pain, create gas, sound annoying to people around you and terrorize the bottoms of shoes. But as long as you're chomping on the sugarless kind, it's a perfectly fine habit. Why? The sticky stuff often contains xylitol, a sugar substitute that may clear your mouth of bacteria to help prevent tooth decay (especially good for kids), and chewing it even burns a few calories—though we don't recommend subbing a few sticks of Trident for your gym membership. During times of stress, unleashing pent-up emotions in a low-calorie stick of cinnamon can foster healthy coping and, more importantly, keep you from cramming more dangerous foods into your mouth. After all, if you're going to have a pack-a-day habit, this is certainly the kind to have.



*taken from Reader's Digest*

*provided by Olmsted County Public Health Services*

May 10, 2009

### Cyberchondria: Just a Click Away

The Internet is a magnificent advance—a huge, multinational, multilingual, electronic library open to everyone with access to a computer and a few basic skills. It's a bottomless mine of medical information. And like other mines, it can be treacherous. There's even a newly coined term for one of the pitfalls: cyberchondria (hypochondria in cyberspace), which means searching the Internet for a diagnosis of your symptoms—and confirming your own worst fears. The Internet is a fine source of medical information, but don't believe everything you read. And beware of testimonials and personal stories. They may be pure fiction – and even if true, may not apply to you. While the Internet is a poor tool for self-diagnosis, it can be a magnificent source of information if you know what your problem is. Start with addresses ending in ".gov" and ".edu." For example, for cancer information start with the National Cancer Institute ([www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)) and also investigate the websites of research centers such as M.D. Anderson, Sloan-Kettering, and the Mayo Clinic. Most important, if you are under treatment, make your doctor a partner in your quest for information. Tell them what you have found out before you take any major steps on your own.

*taken from UC Berkeley Wellness Letter*

*provided by Olmsted County Public Health Services*

May 17, 2009

### Third-hand Smoke – It Sticks Around

People who insist on a smoke-free room at a hotel and a smoke-free car at a rental agency and won't permit smoking at home, even at a party, are sometimes thought to be fanatics. But there really is such a thing as third-hand smoke – the residue that smoke leaves on furniture, carpets, and clothing, as well as on smokers and even nonsmokers. You get a whiff of it sometimes on an elevator or bus. A new study in *Pediatrics* finds that while many of us know about the dangers of secondhand smoke, fewer realize that you cannot simply turn on a fan or open a window and get rid of the fallout. In places where smoking is permitted, children may get a dose of hazardous substances such as toluene and carbon monoxide – even if nobody is smoking. Parents and grandparents may not know this. It's smart to insist on "smoke-free." No level of these toxins is safe.

*taken from UC Berkeley Wellness Letter*



*provided by Olmsted County Public Health Services*

May 24, 2009

### **Good Carbs, Bad Carbs – Which is Which?**

This is a war that has some justification, but we do need to distinguish between good and bad carbohydrates. The reality is that the vast majority of carbohydrates in the American diet are refined starches, sugar, and potatoes, and a war against these is justified. High-fructose corn sweetener should be considered the same as regular table sugar. These carbohydrates provide many empty calories and have multiple adverse metabolic effects, including the elevation of blood triglycerides and blood pressure and reduction of HDL (good) cholesterol. Reducing these carbohydrates should be a top nutritional priority.

On the other hand, whole grains come with lots of fiber, minerals, and vitamins, and we do see that higher intakes of these carbohydrates are related to less weight gain and lower risks of diabetes and heart disease. Thus, replacing the huge amounts of refined starch and sugar in our diets with healthy forms of carbohydrates can have very positive benefits. If we are consuming healthy fats and healthy carbohydrates, the exact proportions don't make a major difference, which gives people many options for creating delicious and healthy meals.

*taken from US News and World Report*

*provided by Olmsted County Public Health Services*

May 31, 2009

### **Use Sun Sense**

Spring brings warmer weather and more outdoor time for most Americans, and along with that comes the need to protect the skin from the sun. Before heading out, remember to:

- **Avoid peak sun hours.** The rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., so staying indoors during these times is the best protection.
- **Wear the right sunscreen every day.** Use products labeled for broad-spectrum protection -- to help block ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays -- and with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 30. Slather on sunscreen about 20 minutes before going in the sun, using about an ounce (the size of a shot glass) to cover your entire body. Reapply every two to three hours spent outdoors. Also, use lip balm with an SPF rating.
- **Wear the right clothing.** A typical cotton T-shirt offers protection equivalent to only SPF 6, far below the commonly recommended minimum of SPF 15. Wear clothing with a thicker weave or apply sunscreen under a thin, porous shirt. In addition, a hat with a full, wide brim gives added protection to the face, neck and scalp, and sunglasses help protect the eyes from damage.
- **Ignore skin type and base tans.** Everyone can burn, regardless of skin pigmentation and even if already tanned. Sunscreen and clothing, not skin color, offer the best protection.

*taken from healthfinder.gov*

*provided by Olmsted County Public Health Services*

