

May 2010

Bright Ideas

Jog your memory.

Dust off your running shoes if you're feeling a bit musty in the head. See page 2.

Wash your hands.

Why this simple technique is the best germ-busting tool around. See page 3.

Measure up.

Your tape measure can indicate future health risks better than the bathroom scales. See page 6.

What's on this month

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						1
			World Asthma Day	International No Diet Day		
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
National Heart Week						
			World Hand Hygiene Day			
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Epilepsy Awareness Week						
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Food Allergy Awareness Week						
			World Hepatitis Day			
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
					Australia's Biggest Morning Tea	
30	31					
	World No Tobacco Day					

“ If each of the UK's 10 million office workers used one less staple a day, that could save 120 tonnes of steel a year. ”

Friends of the Earth.

10 Workplace Cost Cutting Tips

Many belt-tightening measures at work come with the added bonus of reducing waste and cutting carbon emissions. Here are 10 ways you can do your bit.

1 Switch them off! Click off lights, fans, and other electrical equipment when you don't need them, and especially when you are leaving the office. Ensuring that photocopiers are switched off at night and on weekends, for instance, can make significant energy savings of 40 to 60 per cent.

2 Power down. When you can't switch off a machine because it is used so frequently, ensure that it's kept in power-saving mode.

3 Skip the stamp. Share information through emails and the Internet, rather than through a hard copy via the mail.

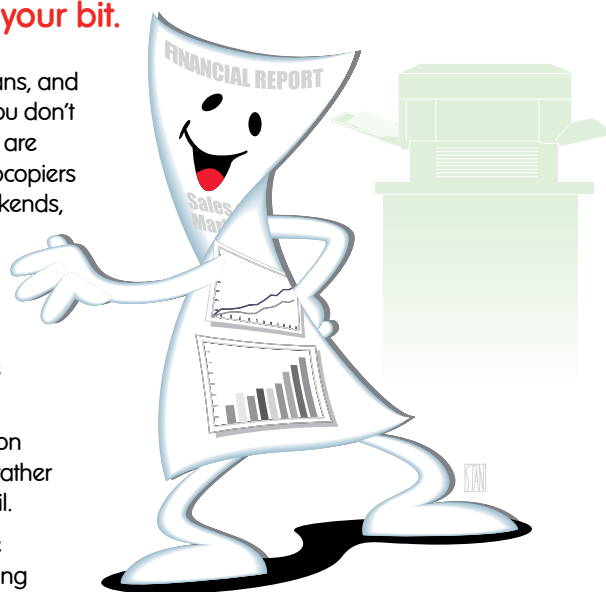
4 Turn up or down. Increasing the temperature of your air conditioning system by one degree C in warm months (and lowering it in winter) will reduce energy consumption – and your bill – by around 10 per cent. Save more by keeping windows and doors closed when the air conditioning is in use.

5 Use your own mugs and glasses. Eliminate the cost of buying paper and plastic cups.

6 Consider travel alternatives. Rather than meeting clients in person, you could consider video conferencing, or other communication medium.

7 Be smart when ordering. Order office supplies once a month to cut down on delivery costs, consider buying generic brands, and order in bulk.

8 Ask questions. Are those expensive or special items really necessary, or would a less expensive alternative suffice?



9 Spare the trees and save the cash. According to Friends of the Earth, 70 per cent of office waste is paper, and it's largely high-grade, expensive white paper. Don't print unless necessary, use both sides of the paper when you can (set the printer to double sided printing), and use recycled paper to print draft documents, or make into a jotting pad.

10 Stay honest. Minor pilfering of office stationery and stores, making coloured photocopies for personal use, and 'borrowing' software for home use could cost your company real money in the long term. But even if you are 'Honest Janet or John', careless use of office stationery, like grabbing a new pen or notepad from the store without checking your desk for one, can also result in large added costs.

Main sources: savepower.nsw.gov.au; info.shine.com; moneyfacts.co.uk; Associatedcontent.com; and kilowatts.com.au.

NEWS BITES

Rage against the wheels

Do you cycle to work and find other road-users rude and inconsiderate? Or are you a car-driver who gets frustrated at having to share the road with bike-riders?

Road rage between cyclists and motorists is often based on lack of knowledge about the laws governing cyclists.

Professor Chris Rissel, an associate professor at the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney states: "37 per cent of motorists don't know cyclists are entitled to use a whole lane, and 69 per cent don't know they are allowed to overtake on the left of cars. 81 per cent don't know cyclists are allowed to ride two abreast, and 13 per cent don't know they are allowed to use the roads at all. That is definitely a contributing factor to the level of tension and danger on the roads."

Source: Dynamic Business magazine at dynamicbusiness.com.

Treat tension on the job

Feeling stressed at work and don't have time for a quick walk around the block? Then try this quick fix to relieve the tension: squeeze the fleshy part of your hand between the thumb and index finger for 20 to 30 seconds. This is the universal pressure point for easing upper-body tension.

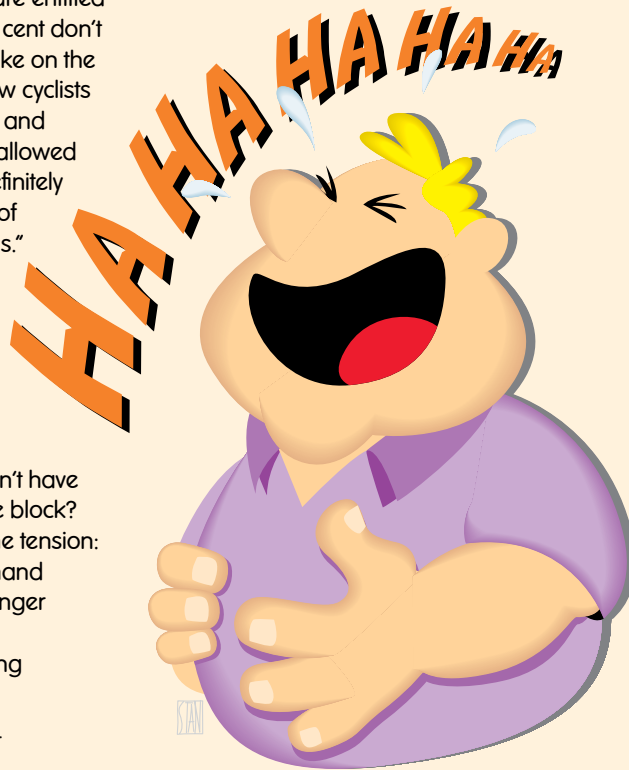
Source: Best Life, cited in Vitality magazine.

Too serious?

Could lightening up help reduce your risk of disease? It seems so, with new research suggesting the simple act of laughing is effective in treating diabetes, chronic pain, and stress.

Studies have shown that people who regularly viewed humorous movies or TV shows improved their HDL (good) cholesterol levels, boosted their immunity, reduced the stress hormone cortisol, and lowered their glucose levels.

Source: Natural Health magazine.



Happy cash

When you have a little extra cash, what are you likely to do with it?

According to two recent studies from the US, spending extra money on experiences – like dining out, attending a sporting event, or visiting the theatre – may make you happier than splashing out at the local shopping mall.

Donating money to charity or buying gifts for others also appears to make people happier than buying things for themselves.

Source: Hope Health Letter.

Jog your memory

If you're having trouble remembering what you did yesterday or what you need to do tomorrow, consider pulling on your sports shoes and heading out for a run.

While the physical benefits of regular running have been familiar to scientists for years, its brain-boosting abilities are now becoming more apparent.

It seems running stimulates the brain to grow fresh grey matter, which enhances mental acuity. Studies revealed that mice running on treadmills for a few days grew hundreds of thousands of new brain cells that boosted their ability to recall information without confusion, a crucial skill for learning.

It's thought that grey matter is stimulated by the increased blood flow, or by altered hormone levels. Exercise is also believed to reduce stress, which inhibits brain cell production through the hormone cortisol.

Source: The Age, cited in The Week magazine.

Myth UNDERSTOOD

Myth: If hepatitis C were really harming my health, I would have symptoms.

Hepatitis C is known as a 'silent killer' – 80 per cent of people with the disease show no signs or symptoms. Liver damage can occur with or without symptoms, and left untreated, the disease can lead to scarring of the liver (cirrhosis) and in some cases to liver failure. Similar to hepatitis B, symptoms can include: nausea, fatigue, aching

May 19th is World Hepatitis Day, a time to bust some common myths surrounding hepatitis C.

muscles, anxiety, stomach ache, loss of appetite, and poor concentration.

Myth: Only people who have a history of drug taking need to be tested for hepatitis C.

Using drugs is a significant risk factor for hepatitis C, but only half of new cases are drug users, with one third of people not knowing how they contracted it. The disease is transmitted via direct contact with infected blood, with possible modes of transmission including tattooing and body piercing using unsafe equipment; needlestick injuries in the health care setting; unsterile medical

procedures provided in another country; and sharing toothbrushes, razor blades or other similar personal items that could have small amounts of blood on them.

Myth: You can prevent hepatitis C through vaccination.

There is a vaccine for hepatitis A and B, but not for hepatitis C. Hepatitis C currently infects around 170 million people worldwide, so a vaccine is much needed, and scientists are currently working on developing one.

Main sources: World Hepatitis Alliance at aminumber12.org; About.com; and Northern Territory AIDS & Hepatitis C Council at ntahc.org.au.

Tap into hand washing

Washing hands was something our parents taught us when we were children, yet as adults, it's a practice we often neglect.

A study carried out in 2006 by the University of Hertfordshire (UK) revealed that 70 per cent of workers failed to wash their hands after visiting the bathroom. Not a comforting thought when you realise that germs can stay alive on our hands for up to three hours!

As you touch people's hands, keyboards, phones, and other objects throughout the day, you accumulate germs on your hands. A study by the University of Arizona shows that office workers are exposed to more germs from their phones and keyboards than from toilet seats. In fact a desk is capable of supporting 10 million bacteria, 400 times as many microbes than toilets.

The best way to prevent such a bacterial invasion is to clean your desk with disinfecting wipes and more importantly, wash your hands regularly and thoroughly.



Hand washing know-how

The goal of washing hands is to eliminate germs, but if you think that simply rinsing your hands and towel drying after going to the loo is enough, think again.

Described by the health care system as 'social hand washing', this technique is recommended following social-type contact, after going to the toilet, and after covering a cough or sneeze. The World Health Organisation has published this mini-guide:

- 1 Use soap all over your hands.
- 2 Rub hands palm to palm.
- 3 Don't forget to clean the backs of your hands too.
- 4 Clean between all fingers, including the thumbs.
- 5 Clean under the nails.
- 6 Rinse hands.
- 7 Dry hands with a clean cloth or towel, or air dry.

Hand washing doesn't take much time or effort, but it's a simple habit that can play a major role in protecting your health.

May 5th is World Hand Hygiene Day.

Hand washing Quiz:

1. How many germs are there on a hand at any given time?

- a) 5,000
- b) 50,000
- c) 500
- d) 50

2. The majority of cold germs are spread through:

- a) sneezing and coughing
- b) kissing
- c) sharing utensils
- d) hand-to-hand contact

3. The most contaminated sites in offices are:

- a) desk tops
- b) telephone
- c) computer mouse and keyboard
- d) all of the above

4. The area of the home with the most germs is:

- a) the bathroom
- b) a child's bedroom
- c) the kitchen
- d) all of the above

5. What is the most effective way to prevent the transmission of disease?

- a) antibiotics
- b) handwashing
- c) condoms
- d) all of the above

Responses: 1a, 2d, 3d, 4d, 5b (Healthcare specialists consider handwashing as the single most effective way to prevent the transmission of disease).

St John First Aid

Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a disorder of the brain characterised by a tendency to have recurrent seizures, and is defined by two or more unprovoked seizures.

Seizures may vary from the briefest lapses of attention or muscle jerks to severe and prolonged convulsions. They may also vary in frequency, from less than one a year to several per day.

To manage a person suffering a seizure:

During the seizure:

- DO NOT try to restrain the person, put anything in their mouth, or move them unless they are in danger.
- Protect the casualty from injury, and place something soft under their head and shoulders.

After the seizure:

- Follow DRABCD. If the person has vomited or has food or fluid in their mouth, place immediately on their side to keep their airway clear. Otherwise, put them on their side as soon as the jerking has stopped.
- Manage any injury resulting from the seizure.
- Do not disturb the casualty if they have fallen asleep, but continue checking their signs of life.

Call an ambulance if the seizure continues for more than five minutes, another seizure quickly follows, if the person has a history of diabetes, or if the casualty is injured.

Epilepsy Awareness Week runs from 10th to 16th May.



©St John Ambulance Australia. This information is not a substitute for first aid training. St John recommends that everyone is trained in first aid. For more information on St John first aid training and kits visit www.stjohn.org.au or call toll free 1300 360 455.

Approximately one in 120 people have epilepsy. Approximately 70 per cent of people who have epilepsy surgery become seizure free.

Epilepsy Action Australia.

What is Courage?

First published in 1997, *Forgiveness & Other Acts of Love*, by Stephanie Dowrick, has now been re-released. In this extract, Stephanie reflects on what it means to be courageous.

"There is a great deal in everyday life that pulls us away from being courageous. We do not live in courageous or even heroic times. In a culture that overtly and persistently thrives on divisiveness and competition, that lauds winners then cuts them down, and that condemns losers while also relying on their complicity, it is all too easy to see ourselves as victims and to blame others for the difficulties that are part of every human life.

"Within such a culture it takes a deliberate commitment to the cultivation of self-love and care for others to remain responsible for each and every banana skin we drop – and to look around us to check that no one else is skidding.

"We live in a culture that adores talk. Despite that, it remains a rare and moving experience to hear someone actually take responsibility honestly for something they have done, to hear someone say: 'I did that. I am sorry. How could I do things differently?' or 'I am sorry that happened. I regret it. How can I now help?' Such simple honesty requires courage. And it builds trust.

"Instead we are far more likely to hear others or ourselves say versions of 'I only did it because...', or 'She made me,' or 'I never did it at all.'

"Paying close attention to what is true, and learning to distinguish it from what one might wish were true, develops trust. But this is not the glamorous side of courage. There are no medals, no parades, no promotions for taking responsibility for your own life. The interior rewards, however, are great."

Source: *Forgiveness & Other Acts of Love* by Stephanie Dowrick, published by Allen & Unwin (RRP \$26.99).

True merit is like a river. The deeper it is, the less noise it makes.

Lord Halifax, Bits & Pieces.

The Activity Pyramid

Your week's fitness

You've heard of the food pyramid, which helps navigate you through a healthy diet. The activity pyramid works in a similar way, as a visual tool for better balancing your exercise program.

As a nation of sports lovers, Australians are pretty woeful when it comes to maintaining their own levels of activity.

The World Health Organisation recommends a minimum of 30 minutes' moderate physical activity, five days out of seven, but at least 60 per cent of Australia's adult population don't even achieve this modest amount.

Such limited movement comes at an enormous cost, with inactivity believed to cause 1.9 million deaths a year worldwide.

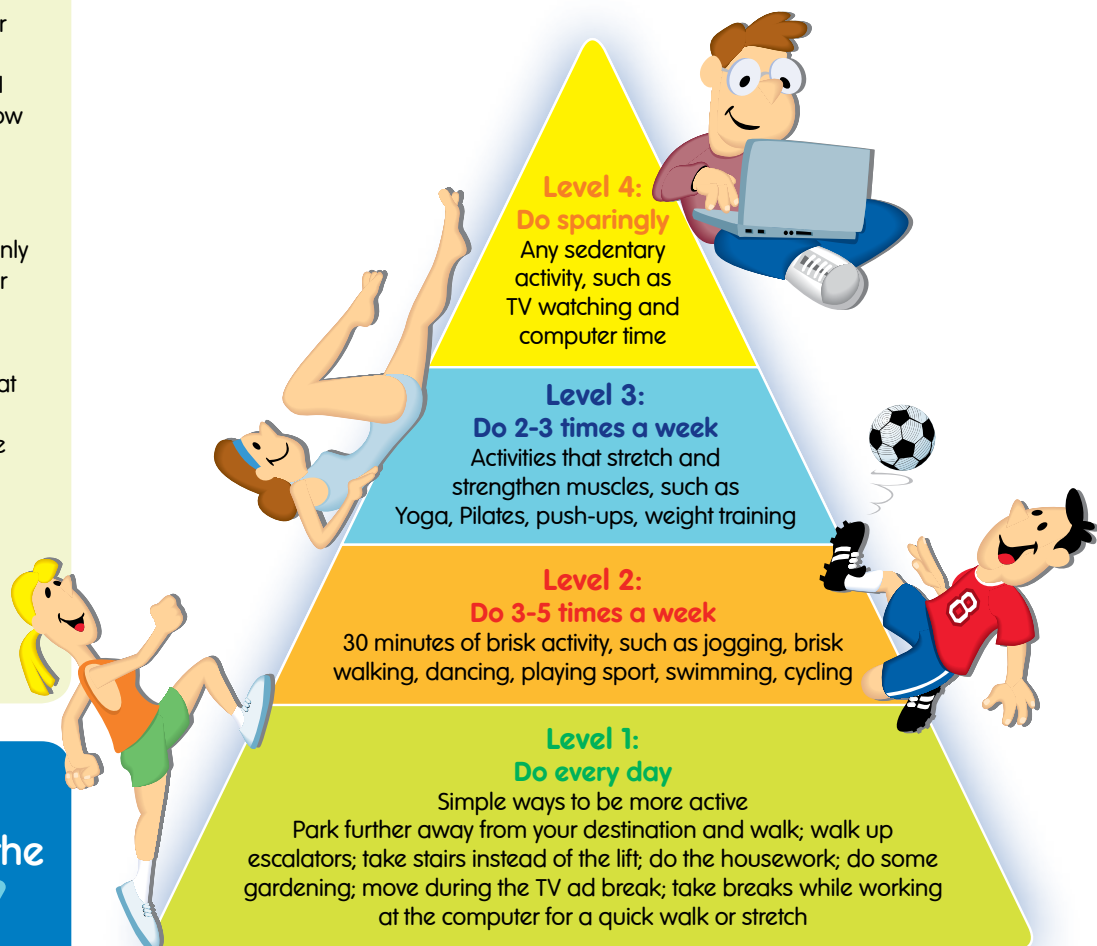
Why get moving?

The first reason is compelling enough – to prolong your life. Death rates from all causes are lower in the regularly active, but particularly from heart disease, diabetes, and several forms of cancer.

But speak to frequent exercisers and delaying death is not high on their list of motivating factors.

The main reason those early morning joggers, walkers, and swimmers get out of bed is that exercise makes them happy! Working out makes you feel better – physically and psychologically – as well as look better, through developing a healthy, toned body.

A recent study from the University of Leeds (UK) found that emphasising the 'fun factor' of moving more was far more successful in encouraging teenagers to exercise than highlighting the health effects. As Reema Sirriyeh, who led the study, commented: "There is evidence that people who believe that physical activity is enjoyable and fun are more likely to engage in sport and exercise."



My Pyramid

plan at a glance.

What exercise is best?

It's true that the best exercise is the one you enjoy. But while any activity is better than none at all, different types of movement benefit your body in different ways, and these are reflected in the Activity Pyramid.

Choosing activities from all levels of the pyramid will help you achieve balance in your exercise program, but if you're just starting out, it's best to begin at the base of the pyramid. Ensure you set realistic goals – "I will take a 10-minute walk during lunch on three days of the week" – and record and reward your progress.

Level 1. Every day: Move whenever you can.

Are you reading this sitting down? Then stand up, stretch, or walk around for a minute or two.

Incidental activity is the term used to describe any movement built up in small amounts over the day, and it may turn out to be the most essential activity of all.

A new Australian study has emphasised the importance of regular, incidental activity by linking over four hours a day of watching television (or sitting in front of a computer screen) with an 80 per cent increased risk of death from cardiovascular disease.

Surprisingly, this study is not recommending you immediately jump on a treadmill or run to the soccer field. Participants in the study reported they were already getting an average of 30 to 45 minutes of exercise a day.

"It's not the sweaty type of exercise we're losing," says David Dunstan, lead researcher at Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute in Melbourne. "It's the incidental moving around, walking around, standing up and utilising muscles that doesn't happen when we're plonked on a couch in front of a television."

So every day, take the opportunity to move:

- Walk an extra bus stop or two.
- Walk up the escalator, or take the stairs instead of the lift.
- Get up from your work station for a few minutes of walking or stretching.
- Walk to the shops, do the housework, or get working in the garden.
- Go for a short walk before breakfast, during your lunch break, or after dinner.

Level 2. Three to five times a week: Get your heart pumping.

This is the type of movement that by increasing your heart rate and breathing, will improve your heart and lung fitness and help you lose or maintain weight.

Aerobic activities include running, brisk walking, cycling, dancing, swimming, and social sports such as tennis, soccer, netball, and basketball.

If wearing the latest in lycra is not your thing, you can incorporate aerobic fitness into your leisure activities by walking along the beach, throwing a ball or Frisbee at the park, trying a new bicycle track, or going for a bushwalk.

And you don't have to huff and puff – keep the pace at a comfortable intensity, and aim for 30 minutes or more per session (or three 10-minute sessions). If you want to lose weight, work up to 45 minutes or longer.

Level 3. Two to three times a week: Stretch and strengthen.

Strength training, such as lifting weights, using resistance bands or dumbbells, or doing curl-ups and push-ups, helps strengthen and tone muscles as well as maintain bone mass, thus reducing the risk of osteoporosis.

Stretching – think stretch or yoga classes, tai chi, Pilates, or dancing – increases flexibility, improves the range of motion of your joints, increases blood flow to muscles, and can also relieve stress.

Don't forget to stretch gently after a run or walk, to help prevent muscle tightness.

Level 4. Cut down on: Inactivity.

Minimise any activity that forces you to stay on your bottom, be it TV watching, playing computer games, surfing the Internet, or working at the computer.

You just can't miss your favourite TV show? Then be active while you're viewing – during ad breaks, try some tricep dips or push ups, invest in an exercise bike or treadmill, or grab a resistance band or dumbbells for some quick repetitions.

Main sources: American Council on Exercise at acefitness.org; Wall Street Journal at wsj.com; Hope Health Letter; ninemsn.com.au; MyPyramid.gov at United States Department of Agriculture; and telegraph.co.uk.

“It is ironic that TVs are getting thinner, while we are getting fatter.”

Tim Chico, cardiologist, quoted at timesonline.co.uk.

Ask The Expert

I've been experiencing niggling back pain for a few weeks. Is it worth visiting an osteopath, or should I wait and hope the pain goes away?

Andrea Robertson, Osteopath of The Australian Osteopathic Association replies:

"It's important not to ignore back pain for long, as it can develop into chronic pain or postural changes, or it can even cause referred pain in other areas of the body, such as neck, shoulder, or leg pain.

"According to osteopathic philosophy, all parts of the body are interconnected and affect each other. Osteopaths believe that if one part of the body is restricted then other parts of the body may adapt and compensate for this, perhaps leading to inflammation, pain, stiffness, and other health conditions.

"If you are experiencing back pain and visit an osteopath, they may be able to help with your back pain and potential referred pain can be avoided. Of course this improves your overall health and wellbeing, allowing you to lead a more active and healthy lifestyle.

"During their treatment, osteopaths use a broad range of gentle hands-on techniques, including soft tissue massage, stretching, deep tactile pressure, and mobilisation or manipulation of joints. Osteopathic treatment will improve the mobility and structure of the body. In turn, other systems of the body such as the circulatory, nervous, and lymphatic systems function more effectively.

"Osteopathy is a recognised Allied Health treatment option, covered by most health funds and in certain circumstances Medicare, DVA, or workers' compensation schemes. Osteopaths are university trained for five years and they are government registered. Osteopaths often work as part of a system of health providers, including GPs, dentists, and podiatrists."

Osteopathy Awareness Week runs from 2nd to 8th May.

To find your nearest osteopath, visit osteopathic.com.au in Australia, and osnz.org in New Zealand.

Address YOUR Stress

A stressful job will raise your risk of heart disease, but there are ways you can help manage it.

A long-term study of British employees found that those people who reported their work was stressful were nearly 70 per cent more likely to develop heart disease than the stress-free.

The stressed employees had less time to exercise and eat well, which clearly had a major impact on their heart disease risk. But regardless of lifestyle, they also showed signs of important biochemical changes that affected their heart.

To protect your heart and counteract the effects of a stressful job, try the following stress-coping strategies:

- **Set aside 10 to 20 minutes every day to unwind** – meditating, yoga or stretching, reading, or even knitting – whatever it takes to invoke the ‘relaxation response’ that allows your cortisol (stress hormone) levels to decrease, and neutralise stress effects such as high blood pressure.
- **Sip on black tea through the day.** A study found people who drank black tea (as opposed to green or herbal) were able to de-stress more quickly than those who drank a tea substitute, because black tea helped cut levels of cortisol.
- **Take ‘silent time’ when you can.** Calm yourself by scheduling in a few minutes of complete silence, whether you’re working, gardening, or taking a walk. Turn off everything that might interrupt you, and don’t talk to anyone.

Heart Week runs from 2nd to 8th May.

Sources: BBC at bbc.co.uk; Natural Health magazine; and Hope Health Letter.

Are you an apple or pear?

Is it time to measure up rather than weigh in? A tape measure can tell you more about your future health risks than your bathroom scales.

Most of us store body fat in one of two places, either around our hips and thighs, or around our middle. Those of us who store fat around the middle are often described as having an ‘apple’ shape, while those with fat around the hips and thighs are known as ‘pears’.

Does it matter what shape you are? Well, it seems that whatever your height, build, or ethnicity, if your waistline is getting bigger, it’s a sign that you could be at greater risk of developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain forms of cancer.

Over the past few years, scientific research has demonstrated that carrying extra weight around your waistline (the ‘apple’ shape) puts your health at greater risk than carrying extra weight around the hips or thighs (the ‘pear’ shape). Hence measuring your waist circumference with a tape measure can be a more accurate measure of your future health risk than stepping on your scales.

For a start, your bathroom scales can’t tell you the type of weight you’re losing. Fluid levels fluctuate from day to day, so whether

you’ve lost fat or fluid is debatable. To complicate matters further, muscle weighs more than fat, so if your scales are not friendly to you, it could be you’re gaining muscle, rather than piling on fat.

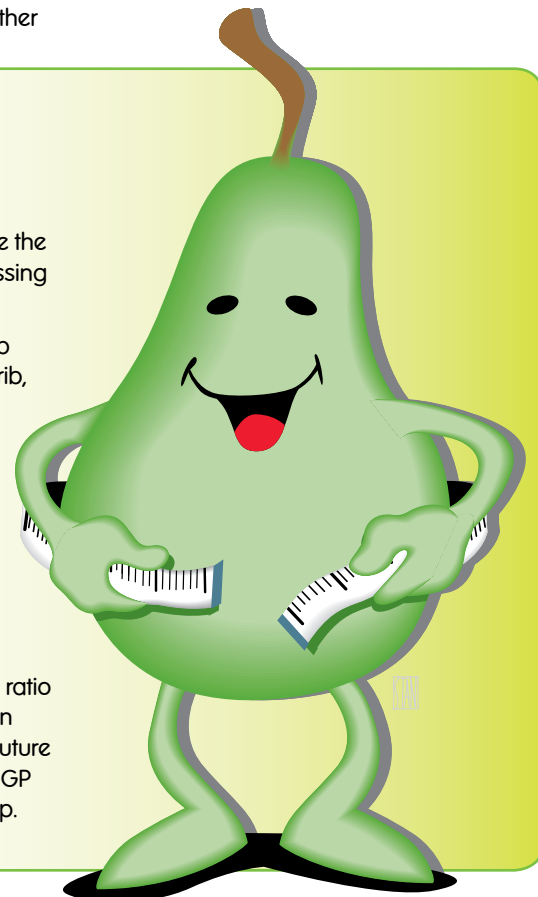
You might be wondering just how your waist measurement affects your heart health. A waist measurement of greater than 94cm for men and 80cm for women is an indicator of internal fat deposits (known as visceral fat), which coat the heart, kidneys, liver, and pancreas. These fat deposits are known to increase the risk of heart disease.

A recent study completed at the University of Texas found that the waist-hip ratio, which measures the proportion of fat stored around your waist and hips, is the best predictor of a person’s risk of heart disease, and is a more accurate measure than your body mass index (BMI). Whereas your BMI provides you with a summary of your overall height and weight, the waist-hip ratio provides you with a measure of fat distribution.

Measuring your waist-hip ratio

- Breathe out normally, making sure the tape is snug, but without compressing the skin.
- Measure halfway between the top of your hipbone and your lowest rib, in line with your belly button.
- Measure your hips at their widest point.
- Finally divide your waist measurement by your hip measurement; the figure you get is your waist-hip ratio.

If you are a man and your ratio is greater than 1.0, or a woman with a ratio greater than 0.8, it means you are an apple shape and at greater risk of future health issues. It’s worth seeing your GP for a more thorough health check-up.



Sources: The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition; Journal of Women’s Health; bbc.co.uk/health; cnn.com/HEALTH; and Women’s Health & Fitness magazine.

“ Cardiovascular disease kills one Australian nearly every 10 minutes. ”

Heart Foundation.



Brain blocks

Whether it's the name of the film you saw last week, the colleague you're introducing, or the client you've just met, struggling to overcome that mental block can be frustrating.

We've all been hit by mental blocks, when you know the detail you need is somewhere in your memory, but it's as though a brick wall has sprung up to hide it.

Memory blocks range from mildly irritating lapses in mid-conversation to catastrophic memory failures during a presentation. Fortunately, there are a few tricks that can help you to overcome them:

Switch your attention

Sometimes the effort of remembering seems to create a mental block of its own! If this happens, switch your attention to something totally different. Change the topic of conversation, go and make yourself a cup of tea, or grab a paper to read. By consciously not trying to remember the piece of information, you may find that the answer surfaces of its own accord.

Say the alphabet

If you are trying to remember a name or a word, sometimes getting the first letter will be enough to bring it back to mind.

Simply run through the alphabet to yourself, pause after each letter to allow time for the process of association to work, and eventually you should encounter a letter that 'feels closer' than the others. Repeat it out loud, and it might help bring the right name or word to mind.

Listen to music

Recent research by the Department of Music at Sheffield University (UK) suggests that music, by aiding relaxation, can put the

worrisome unfocused part of the mind to sleep and consequently decrease so-called 'mental blocks'. Have your MP3 player handy on your desk so that you can quickly listen to your favourite song – it may help you remember that specific detail stuck somewhere in your grey matter.

Use free association

The free association of ideas, also used in psychoanalysis, can be used when you are trying to bring to mind a particular name.

Begin by concentrating hard on what the person looks and sounds like, describing to yourself any distinctive characteristics or physical features. Think about where and when you met the person, picturing who else was there and remembering their names. By focusing on all the associations you have with the person, you may find the name will slot into place.

Breathe deeply and try to relax

Stress is a major factor in mental blocks. It's easy to panic when information you are desperately searching for does not emerge straightaway, especially in a highly-charged situation such as when meeting your boss. When it happens, breathe deeply, reassure yourself and you may be pleasantly surprised to see the piece of information you've been looking for resurfacing.

Sources: Making the Most of your Brain by Reader's Digest Australia; Communication Briefing Newsletter; and Music listening practices in workplace settings in the UK – an exploratory survey of office-based settings by Anneli Beronius Haake.

“ Aim for success, not perfection. ”

David H. Burns



corporatehealthjuice.com.au

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The TUCKERBOX

Beef Stifado

As a reminder to say thanks to our mothers this month, this recipe is taken from *Recipes My Mother Cooked*, and comes from Sydney chef, Alex Herbert.

1.5 kg beef cheeks
salt and freshly ground black pepper
150ml red wine
1 bay leaf
5 sprigs fresh thyme
2 allspice berries
5 black peppercorns
olive oil and butter, for browning
2 large brown onions, chopped
50ml balsamic vinegar
chicken stock, to cover
flat-leaf parsley, chopped
red wine vinegar, to taste

Trim beef cheeks, leave whole, and season with salt and black pepper. Marinate the meat overnight in the wine, bay leaf, thyme, allspice, and peppercorns.

The next day, drain the cheeks from the liquid (reserve liquid). Using a large pan, lightly brown the cheeks on all sides in olive oil and butter, then remove.

In the same pan, brown the onion, deglaze with the reserved marinating juices and balsamic vinegar, and return the cheeks to pan.

Cover with the stock, cover the pot, and gently braise at 130°C until the cheeks fall apart, about 2-3 hours.

Allow to cool in the fridge overnight. Remove the cheeks from their jelly, and reduce this liquid before returning the cheeks to heat through. When ready to serve, adjust the seasoning and add a little red wine vinegar to taste, with lots of chopped fresh parsley.

Serves 6-8.

Source: *Recipes my Mother Cooked*, published by Allen & Unwin (RRP\$29.99).

👉 If you experience dry eyes, aim to eat two servings a week of Omega 3-rich oily fish like salmon, anchovies, mackerel, and sardines. 👉

Dry eye specialist Dr Michel Guillon.

7 ways to max your nutrients

You buy the best produce and eat a varied diet, yet poor preparation and eating habits could be robbing you of valuable nutrients. Get the most out of your food with these easy techniques.

1 Shop for fresh produce twice a week.

While it may make sense to time-poor shoppers, buying fruit and veg in one hit is actually not that good for you nutritionally, as some vitamins and minerals start to diminish the moment they are harvested. If you are stuck, don't forget the value of frozen produce, as these are harvested at their peak, then snap frozen to retain maximum nutrients.

2 Keep the skin on.

Don't toss away vital nutrients and fibre by peeling fruit and vegetables. Instead gently scrub potatoes, kumara, and carrots, and for those fruits and veggies that must be peeled, use a vegetable peeler or sharp knife to take away as thin a layer as possible.

3 Be wary of water.

Boiling is the enemy of water-soluble vitamins like B and C, which readily leech out into the water. Instead, preserve nutrients by steaming, stir-frying, or baking your vegetables.

4 Season liberally.

Don't be afraid to use herbs and spices readily in your cooking. Not only do they enhance the flavour of your food without adding fat or sodium, many are also high in antioxidants.

5 Don't forget the fat.

Eating a fresh, green salad daily means you can boost your levels of folate, vitamins B6, C, and E – but skip the non-fat dressing. A US study found that the oil in regular salad dressings helps the body absorb more of the valuable nutrients, such as lycopene and beta-carotene.

6 Match your foods.

Iron is an essential mineral, but one that can be difficult to absorb. Maximise your iron intake by pairing iron-rich foods (meat, fish, leafy greens, and beans) with vitamin C-rich foods such as citrus, tomatoes, capsicum, and strawberries.

7 Take your time.

Chew your food well and eat slowly, and you'll experience better digestion as well as enhanced nutrition. Chewing an apple, for instance, helps to break down cell walls, which makes the nutrients inside more easily accessed by enzymes in your intestines.

Sources: Shape, Good Health, and Healthy Food Guide magazines; and timesonline.co.uk.



When is 'best before' past it?

Many foods you find in the supermarket will be marked with either a 'use-by' or a 'best-before' date. These are not the same thing.

A use-by date is stamped on perishables such as meat, fish, and dairy products, and means the food cannot be sold after that date, as it will become unsafe to eat. Don't eat any food that's past its use-by date, even if it looks and smells normal.

The best-before date is a little different. This is more like a quality assurance used on products with a long shelf-life, such as biscuits and cereal. Eating this product after the best-before date is unlikely to harm you, but the product won't be as high quality as before the date.

Main source: Choice magazine.