



## Health & Wellness Newsletter

August 2008

Welcome to your online Health & Wellness Newsletter, where you're kept up to date with the latest news and views to improve your health. Whether you need to boost your body or free your mind, we've got something for you!

### August 2008 Health Calendar



#### **National Immunisation Awareness Week (3 - 9 August)**

National Immunisation Awareness Week kicks off around the country on Monday, August 3 with various district activities designed to inform the public about the success of the Expanded Programme on Immunisation and benefits of the early childhood vaccination programme in controlling vaccine preventable diseases.

### Self-esteem and weight: being positive

***You don't need to lose weight to feel better about your body. Try these tips to put yourself in a more positive light:***

- First and foremost, tell yourself that you are a person of value even if you never lose another kilo.
- Get the facts. There are a lot of myths out there about size and weight. What the research really says and what the public believes are two entirely different things.
- Don't put your life on hold until you lose weight. Don't wait until you lose x number of kilograms to buy attractive clothes, to take that trip, to further your education, to join a club. The problem with putting all these things on hold is that you're left with little else to do but think about what you'll be eating for your next meal. It actually increases your preoccupation with food.
- Dress in clothes that fit. When we feel badly about our bodies, we often dress in shabby clothes, waiting until we lose weight before we buy something we like. But why? Feel good now! Find attractive clothes that fit your current size. Treating yourself will make you feel renewed. Don't assume that you can't look good until you lose weight.
- Recognise your special qualities. Make a list of your positive qualities, talents, and accomplishments. Your weight will pale in comparison. Are you kind? Artistic? Honest? Good in business? Do you make people laugh? Post your list near the mirror or another place where you'll see it every day. Focus on the positives. You are so much more than just your weight.



## If someone close has a substance abuse problem

*If someone close to you has a substance abuse problem, you're in a position to help him or her. You may not be able to cure the problem, nor can you force treatment, but at the right time a gentle nudge may be all that's necessary. Learn as much as you can, forget about the myths around substance abuse and when the "right time" comes, you'll know what to do.*



### What to do

- Try to stay calm, unemotional and factually honest in speaking about their behaviour and its day-to-day consequences
- Let the person know you are reading and learning about alcohol and other drug abuse, attending Al-Anon, Narc-Anon, Alateen and other support groups
- Discuss the situation with someone you trust, such as a social worker, counsellor, friend or someone who has experienced alcohol or other drug abuse personally or as a family member
- Establish and maintain a healthy atmosphere in the home, and try to include the alcohol/drug abuser in family life
- Explain the nature of alcoholism and other drug addiction as an illness to children in the family
- Encourage new interests and do things the person enjoys. Encourage them to see old friends (who don't abuse drugs or alcohol)
- Be patient and live one day at a time. Alcoholism and other drug addiction generally take a long time to develop, and recovery doesn't happen overnight. Try to accept setbacks and relapses calmly and with understanding
- Refuse to drive with anyone who's been drinking heavily or using other drugs

You can't cure the illness, but when the time comes you can guide the person to get help. Just remember, you are not responsible for your loved one's behaviour. Ultimately, the decision to seek and stay in treatment lies with him or her.



**Food Fact**  
*Researchers have found that strawberries help protect the brain from oxidative stress and may reduce the effects of age-related declines in brain function.*



## The Power of Green

Green vegetables and other green foods are powerhouses of disease-fighting nutrients, including antioxidants and phytochemicals. Green vegetables include dark green leafy vegetables and cruciferous vegetables. Besides these greens, a new generation of green food supplements, such as wheat grass, barley grass and spirulina, has emerged.

# Different Life- Long Commitment

*Not all Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) can be treated with a handy prescription. Other than HIV, there are many other STIs that are, for the most part, incurable. Some are a minor nuisance, while others have serious life-long implications.*

## Herpes simplex

Herpes is a viral infection that causes painful or itching ulcers on or around the genitals (and even inside the vagina). Herpes affects as many as one in six people.

Herpes ulcers appear for a few weeks and eventually disappear. The virus lies dormant in the nerves and may cause ulcers on an ongoing basis for the rest of the affected person's life. Someone who has been infected with Herpes can pass it on to sexual partners, even when there are no ulcers.

There are no predictable risk factors for when ulcer might recur. Some women find they occur around their period. Some people find they tend to recur when they stressed or suffering from other infections. Some people might suffer from relapses twice in a year, while others may only have them twice in a lifetime.

There are treatments that can be taken to lessen the severity of the ulcers when they occur. However, Herpes cannot be cured.

It's important to have yourself tested, as some STIs can only be detected through blood tests. You may have no symptoms at the moment, but STIs can cause serious problems if they are not properly managed.



## Sexual Health Quiz

Decide if you think the answers are true or false

1. HIV was discovered in 1983.  
**True or False**
2. Oil based lubricants cannot damage latex condoms.  
**True or False**
3. HIV cannot be transmitted in breast milk.  
**True or False**
4. The contraceptive pill is 100% effective.  
**True or False**
5. You are more likely to get Thrush if you wear tight jeans.  
**True or False**
6. If you catch a sexually transmissible infection you will always have symptoms.  
**True or False**



Answers: 1:T, 2:F, 3:F, 4:F, 5:T, 6:F

## Sound saving tips

*Everyone agrees that saving money is not easy, but remember that every little bit counts when its going into your savings.*



**Here are a few ways to save money:**

- **Cut back on take aways and restaurant foods:** Touching up on your cooking skills will save you money. Even buying easy-to-cook or microwave meals can work out cheaper than a trip to a restaurant
- **Buy fewer magazines:** Swap magazines with your friends
- **Be creative when it comes to gifts:** Buy something simple and use creative wrapping paper, like brown paper decorated with flowers or fruit. Buy mini-cards and re-use wrapping paper

# Laughter really is the best medicine



*Okay, so maybe it's not the best medicine. But it is the most readily available. It's also free, has no side effects, and you don't have to worry about missing a dose. As an added bonus, it's good for everyone around you too!*

A healthy sense of humor can be one of the most important tools in your self-care kit. You can use it to relieve your stress, replenish your immune system, and even change your perspective on things. Laughter benefits body and mind.

Various studies attest to the health benefits that laughter holds. Granted, some are less scientific than others, but it proves our point nonetheless. The healthy habit of laughter has the following advantages:

- **Stress relief.** Laughter lowers your blood pressure and pulse rate and helps your muscles to relax. It counteracts your body's stress response by lowering the stress hormones cortisol, adrenaline, dopamine and growth hormone. In addition, it releases "happy chemicals" in your brain, leaving you with a sense of well-being or even euphoria.
- **Increased immunity.** Laughter increases the number of antibody-producing cells and enhances the effectiveness of killer T-cells. This means a stronger immune system, as well as fewer physical effects and immune suppression caused by stress.
- **Pain relief.** Laughter increases the production of natural painkillers, thereby our tolerance to pain.
- **Muscle relaxation.** Laughter exercises the diaphragm, contracts the abs and even works out the shoulders, leaving muscles more relaxed afterward. It even provides a good workout for the heart. According to the late Dr Laurence Peter, author of the Peter Principle, the bigger the laugh, the lower the tension and the more long-lasting the relief.

## Menopause



*Menopause is when menstruation stops completely. This usually occurs between the ages of 50 and 55. Some of the symptoms associated with this "change of life" include irregular menstrual cycle, hot flashes, mood changes, vaginal dryness, and skin changes. Your symptoms are also likely to be very individual. You may breeze through menopause with few symptoms or you may experience a number of these physical and emotional changes.*

- If you're experiencing hot flashes, get regular exercise, dress in layers and try to pinpoint what triggers your hot flashes. For many women, triggers may include hot beverages, spicy foods, alcohol, hot weather or a warm room.
- For vaginal dryness or discomfort with intercourse, use vaginal lubricants or moisturisers. Staying sexually active also helps these problems.
- If you have trouble sleeping, avoid caffeinated drinks and don't exercise right before bed. Practicing relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation can be very helpful. You can find a number of books and tapes on different relaxation exercises.
- If you experience night sweats, wear cool cotton clothing to bed and keep an extra set handy.