

FEBRUARY 2010

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## Heart-Smart Moves

**S**ome people run marathons. Others can barely walk around the block. Why? It could be a matter of heart, lung and blood vessel strength, or *cardiovascular* fitness.

A sedentary lifestyle can reduce your cardiovascular fitness, which you need to help avoid the leading health threats – heart attack and stroke.

Fact is, your heart, lungs and blood vessels need regular exercise. A strong cardiovascular system works efficiently to deliver oxygen and nutrients to all parts of your body for optimal health.

The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends that healthy adults aged 18 to 64 get 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Just accumulate it in segments of at least 10 minutes throughout the day.

### How do you judge intensity?

**Moderate:** Your heart rate is increased above your resting level. The clue is you can still talk and breathe comfortably.

**Vigorous:** It's harder to breathe and talk normally; you aren't able to hum or whistle a song.

**You can strengthen your heart with cardio, or aerobic (with oxygen) exercise.**

**Examples:** walking outside or on a treadmill, riding a stationary bike or bicycling, and swimming. Other activities such as dancing and raking leaves count, too. Why? Because you can do them continuously at your own pace and they work your large muscle groups.



**How to get started:** Begin slowly and gradually build stamina and endurance to avoid pain. Don't overdo it! Add a few minutes every 2 to 3 sessions until you can exercise for 60 minutes continuously.

**Note:** Talk to your health care provider before significantly increasing your physical activity level, especially if you're inactive or you have a health condition, such as type 2 diabetes or knee problems.

### HEALTH notes

■ **Portable, gas-powered generators** come in handy when the power goes out, especially during cold weather. However, inhaling the carbon monoxide (CO) produced by generators is dangerous. **Caution:** Never use a generator inside any structure, including houses, garages and sheds, even if windows and doors are open. Only operate generators outside, far away from the doors, vents and windows of any building.

■ **Put off procrastination.** We tend to put off tasks we find difficult or unpleasant. But the longer you delay the task, the more likely you'll do it poorly or not at all. **Solution:** Try to visualize how you would complete the task – “seeing” it done may boost your motivation and confidence to do it. With practice, procrastination is a habit you can beat.

■ **Health information on the Web is not always backed by scientific fact.** Be wary of sites that sell cures or make unsubstantiated claims. For reliable health and medical information, use websites of well-known, reputable organizations and government agencies such as Health Canada, research and advocacy organizations, professional medical groups and universities. Before using any treatments you discover online, share the details with your health care provider.

■ **What is neuropathy?** It's a nerve abnormality or disease. The condition usually affects the peripheral nerves that stretch from your spinal cord to your skin, muscles and organs. Symptoms include numbness, weakness and painful sensations such as tingling, electric-like, pinching or stabbing, typically in the arms, legs, hands or feet. The most common cause is type 1 or 2 diabetes. See your health care provider if you have symptoms. Early treatment is important to prevent further nerve damage.



### FEBRUARY GOAL

Today, trade 30 minutes of TV or Web surfing to do something physical – take a walk or play with your kids.

## Workouts for Sharp Minds

**A healthy body needs an agile mind.**

**Just as you need to exercise your body to stay physically fit, your brain needs activity to stay mentally fit.** Challenging your mind daily sharpens those gray cells.

An aging brain does not equal a dull mind. Research shows connections between brain nerve cells may be stimulated and strengthened by certain activities. **To build your brain muscle:**

**SOCIALIZE.** Meet with friends often, take a class or join a club. Conversing with others requires several mental challenges such as concentration, analysis and effective communication.

**VOLUNTEER.** Helping others allows you to use your talents and mental skills. Activities at your local school, church, community group or charitable organization can often provide a creative and social outlet that gets your brain cells hopping.

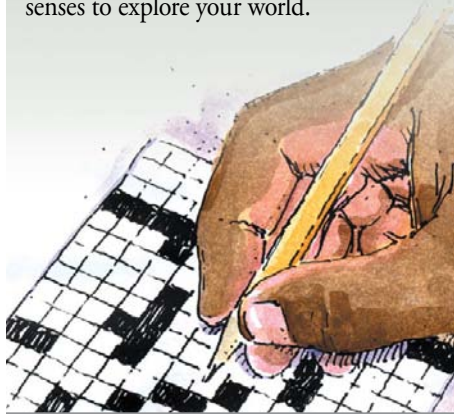
**START A HOBBY.** How about art, photography, home repair or renovation, knitting, or collecting?

**TAKE A CLASS.** Learn a foreign language. It stimulates areas of the brain that process reading, speaking, listening and thinking.

**LISTEN TO CLASSICAL MUSIC.** It may increase concentration and productivity.

**PLAY GAMES.** Crossword puzzles, sudoku, chess and board games are fun mental activities. Create your own board game with your kids or friends.

**GO LOW-TECH.** Try other ways to exercise your mind besides watching TV or Web surfing. Visit a museum or take a walk – use your imagination and senses to explore your world.



## Metabolism Boosters

**Y**our metabolism involves a complex network of hormones and enzymes that convert food into fuel and also affect how efficiently you burn that fuel. The metabolic process establishes the rate at which we burn calories and ultimately how quickly we gain weight or how easily we lose it.

Metabolism is influenced by age (metabolism naturally slows about 5% per decade after age 40); gender (men generally burn more calories at rest than women); genes; and proportion of lean body mass (the more muscle you have, the higher your metabolic rate tends to be). The best ways to boost your metabolism:

**Increase your muscle mass.** Try strength training (resistance exercise) 3 times a week using free weights, flexible bands or weight machines. Muscle workouts help offset the weight gain and muscle loss associated with aging. After about age 30 muscle loss occurs at the rate of 3% to 5% per decade.

**Increase your physical activity,** which boosts metabolism and can also increase muscle mass. If you've been inactive for a while, start with the recommended 10 minute-minimum to avoid



overuse and injury. Accumulate 20 or 30 minutes, building to 60 minutes in 10-minute bouts until you feel ready to exercise non-stop for 60 minutes or more.

To avoid boredom, choose a variety of activities. For example, walk briskly for 30 minutes twice a week, do yard work or chores on 2 other days, or have a weekly basketball game.

**Your ultimate goal:** Work up to 60 minutes most days of the week – and eventually longer – as you gain strength and endurance.

**But that's not all** – when you increase your metabolism, you increase your strength and stamina; have lower risk of injury and back and joint pain; stronger bones; and improved sleep and mood.

## Wheelchair Safety

**W**heelchairs, whether manual or motorized, allow people with limited mobility to move independently. The Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) and Wheelchair User. Net offer these tips for getting the most out of your wheelchair or scooter:



- ⚠️ **Read the owner's manual** before you take your chair for a spin.
- ⚠️ **Always use your safety (hip) belt.** A sudden impact can propel you out of your chair if you are not wearing your belt. You can also use a chest harness or straps, foot and ankle straps and postural control belts for added safety.
- ⚠️ **Check batteries** to make sure they're fully charged before you use your wheelchair regardless of your destination or distance you have to travel.
- ⚠️ **Use anti-tippers** (newer models have built in anti-tippers). Set brakes when you are not moving.
- ⚠️ **Get regular tune-ups.** The MDA recommends you have your vendor routinely check batteries, brakes, tires, and wheel locks.
- ⚠️ **Stay dry outdoors.** Use a cape or poncho to cover you and the wheelchair.
- ⚠️ **Keep footrests and batteries clear.** The added weight of even a small child can cause injury or damage your chair.
- ⚠️ If you use a power wheelchair, **turn off the power or set wheel locks** (on manual chairs) before you transfer or when you park it on an inclined surface, such as a ramp or sloping theatre aisle. Avoid steep slopes if you can.
- ⚠️ **Ride your wheelchair only in designated pedestrian routes.** Ride on the sidewalk whenever possible, in the same direction as traffic. Use flags, lights and reflectors to make your chair more visible.
- ⚠️ **Avoid pebbled or grassy areas.**

**A note about cell phones:** The MDF recommends turning the chair off before using your phone. There is a slight risk the phone could interfere with the chair, and cause it to move. This practice also reduces distraction when you operate your chair.

## Q&A: Quitting Smokeless Tobacco

**S**pit, or smokeless, tobacco, available as snuff and chew, has long been popular among athletes. If you use spit tobacco and are concerned about its effects on your health, consider the facts:

### Is smokeless tobacco a good substitute for cigarettes?

No. While the hazards of cigarettes get more attention, its smokeless counterparts pose serious health risks, too. Smokeless tobacco has more than 3,000 chemicals, including 28 carcinogens, according to Health Canada. Ingredients include arsenic, formaldehyde, cadmium and nickel. Smokeless tobacco can cause:

- nicotine addiction
- stained and abraded teeth and bad breath
- disgust from others when you spit
- gum disease and lost teeth
- increased risk of high blood pressure and heart disease
- mouth cancer – tumors of the lips, cheeks, teeth and gums (can lead to facial disfigurement and death)
- increased risk of laryngeal and esophageal cancers

### I want to quit smokeless tobacco but I'm having a hard time. Why?

Smokeless tobacco is just as hard to kick as cigarettes – nicotine in any form is highly

## Q: Benefits of antioxidants?

**A:** Scientists believe antioxidants help prevent disease by reducing free radicals in your body. These are organic molecules that occur naturally every time we breathe, eat or are exposed to heat, radiation, pollution or tobacco. The problem with free radicals: They cause oxidation, a gradual process that may lead to cell damage, aging, cancer, heart disease, memory loss, arthritis and cataracts.

The body naturally reduces oxidation by producing some antioxidants. You can help increase your body's supply by eating plant foods rich in antioxidant nutrients. These include

vitamins A (carotenes), C and E, lycopene and numerous other substances in plant foods.

Health authorities recommend we eat a variety of antioxidant-rich foods – fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts and seeds. Because foods contain thousands of antioxidants, research has not determined which ones are the most beneficial.

**Important:** Eat a variety of plant foods rather than only 2 or 3 favourites. Consult your provider before taking antioxidant supplements.



addictive. In fact, smokeless tobacco delivers more nicotine than cigarettes – an average of 3.6mg in snuff and 4.6mg in chewing tobacco – compared to 1.8mg in cigarettes.

### How can I quit for good?

Ask your health care provider about nicotine replacement aids and medication. Nicotine gum and lozenges may be the most beneficial for chew because they work as oral substitutes, but patches and nasal spray forms are also available. Prescription medication can help with the behavioural aspects of smokeless tobacco use. But there are important steps you can take on your own:

- Use less tobacco and less often.
- Avoid keeping the tobacco in one spot in your mouth.
- Have your gums checked regularly by your health care provider or dentist.

### Trying to quit?

If you want help quitting smokeless or any other kind of tobacco, visit Health Canada's On The Road to Quitting Program: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/tobac-tabac/quit-cesser/nou-maintenant/road-voie/index-eng.php>.

## Telecommuting Strategies

Are you one of the estimated 2.5 million Canadians who telecommute at least 1 day a week? (Canadian Telework Association)

Working outside of the office offers several advantages: increased productivity and flexibility, as well as reduced transportation costs and travel time. Telecommuting also produces less pollution and traffic congestion.

Working from home may take some getting used to. *Follow these basics for success:*

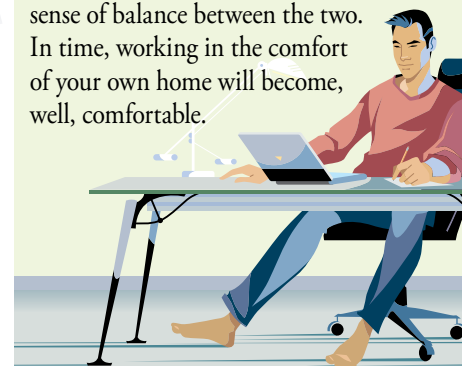
**Set ground rules.** If you work at home, structure is vital to your productivity. Keep your schedule posted so other household members know when you are not to be disturbed. Let calls to your personal phone go to voice mail during office hours.

**Work out the details together.** If your only work space is the dining room table or another common area, figure out which routines family members need to change to avoid disturbing you. For example, you may decide to move the TV out of the living room if you work there and your schedule overlaps with your family's viewing habits.

**Take a break.** It's tempting to work straight through your lunch hour; instead, use time to eat with a friend or take a walk. Physically leaving your home office, even briefly, helps reduce isolation and offers a change of scenery. Get up and stretch periodically, too.

**Communicate regularly.** Obviously, you need to keep your co-workers informed: Tell them what you're working on, and provide updates on any issues that require follow-up.

Separating work from your personal life when both occupy the same space takes practice. It's key to maintaining a sense of balance between the two. In time, working in the comfort of your own home will become, well, comfortable.



Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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# DIETARY FATS



**F**ats, fats, fats – how do you separate the good from the bad? You need some fat to stay well. Here’s a quick review of fat types:

## HEROES

**Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats** – Using these fats instead of the “bad” fats can help lower cholesterol levels and reduce the risk of developing heart disease. Canada’s Food Guide recommends 30-45 milligrams/2-3 tablespoons of these fats every day, in addition to oily fish (see below).

**Monounsaturated fat:** Olive and canola oils, nuts, avocados and olives are good sources.

**Polyunsaturated fat:** Choose fatty fish, nuts, seeds and vegetable oils such as corn, safflower, soy and sunflower.



**Omega-3 fatty acids** – This type of polyunsaturated fat may help protect your heart and is being studied for its potential to help prevent conditions such as diabetes and Alzheimer’s.

Cold-water fish, including salmon, sardines and mackerel, are good choices that are generally low in mercury. Eat at least 2 Food Guide servings a week: 1 serving is 2½ ounces/75 grams or ½ cup/125 milligrams.



## VILLAINS

**Limit foods rich in saturated or trans fats** – These fats raise LDL or “bad” cholesterol levels and increase the risk of developing heart disease.

**Trans fats:** Some packaged, processed and fast foods may contain trans fats. Read Nutrition Facts panels carefully and choose products with zero trans fat. Try to avoid packaged foods with the ingredient *hydrogenated oil* or *shortening*.

**Tip:** In Canada, manufacturers can label their products trans fat free and list 0 gram trans fat per serving if they contain fewer than 0.2 grams of trans fat per serving, and have fewer than 2 grams of saturated and trans fat combined.

**Saturated fats:** Choose leaner meats and skinless poultry and limit processed meats, such as bacon and lunch meats. Avoid deep-fried foods; grill, bake or broil meats and poultry. Cook with olive or canola oils instead of butter. Avoid palm, palm kernel and coconut oils.

**Keep this in mind:** All oils have 120 calories and 14 grams of fat per tablespoon. So watch your intake in general – an excess of oil in any form might cause weight gain.

### Recipe of the Month

## Raspberry Vanilla Cream Pie

- 2 cups/250ml nonfat vanilla yogurt (16 ounces)
- 1 10-oz/238g package frozen raspberries in syrup, thawed
- 1 envelope unflavoured gelatin
- 1 ready-made chocolate cookie pie crust

- 1 Drain yogurt in the fridge for at least 2 hours, or overnight, in a cheesecloth-lined colander to remove excess water.
- 2 As berries thaw in 1-2 hours, drain syrup into a small saucepan; reserve berries.
- 3 Sprinkle gelatin over ¼ cup/50ml syrup and let soften 1 minute; stir over low heat just until gelatin is dissolved.
- 4 Place yogurt in a large bowl and whisk in gelatin syrup.
- 5 Fold in berries gently and pour into crust; cover and refrigerate 2 hours, or until set.



### Nutrition Facts

Makes 8 servings.

Amount Per Serving	Calories	179
	<b>Protein</b>	5.3g
	<b>Total Fat</b>	5.5g
	Saturated Fat	1g
	<b>Cholesterol</b>	1g
	<b>Carbohydrate</b>	28g
	<b>Fibre</b>	2.3g
	<b>Sodium</b>	179mg