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Newsletter

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Happiness Linked to Better Health

Happiness and other positive emotions may play an even more important role in health than previously thought, found a U.S. study. Sheldon Cohen, psychology professor at Carnegie Mellon University, found the people who report positive emotions are less likely to catch colds and also less likely to report symptoms when they do get sick. This held true regardless of their levels of optimism, extraversion, purpose and self-esteem, and of their age, race, gender, education, body mass or pre-study immunity to the virus.

“We need to take more seriously the possibility that positive emotional style is a major player in disease risk,” said Cohen. The researchers interviewed volunteers over several weeks to assess their moods and emotional styles, and then infected them with either a rhinovirus or an influenza virus. The volunteers were quarantined and examined to see if they came down with a cold and those with positive emotions were less likely to get sick.

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Early Sport Specialization Not Recommended

Early age sports specialization is common because many believe it leads to athletic success, but a U.S. expert says it can have the opposite effect. Parents and coaches contribute to the problem when they pressure children to specialize and encourage year-round training, according to says Jennifer VanSickle of the University of Indianapolis. “Participating in a variety of sports will help a child develop other athletic skills that they would not develop if they specialized in one sport too early,” said VanSickle. “Athletic skills such as speed, balance, mental focus, jumping and reacting are all stressed differently in different sports.” Early sports specialization can lead to problems including physical and psychological burnout, the loss of the diverse social contacts from different sports, a loss of transferable athletic skills, a greater risk of overuse and repetitive stress injuries, higher levels of pre-competitive anxiety and difficulty coping with athletic failure.

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Sorely in Need of a Chiropractor

The impact of pain, particularly chronic pain, is far-reaching. It can affect everything from one’s day-to-day activities and quality of life to the level of employee productivity at America’s most powerful corporations. According to a recent report from the National Center for Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), approximately one in 10 adults suffers chronic pain lasting at least a year, and one in four reports suffering pain for at least an entire day during the previous month. Adults 18 years and older were instructed to report whether they had experienced any of four types of pain during the three months prior to interview: low back pain, migraine/severe headache, neck pain, and facial ache in the jaw or joint in front of the ear. Respondents were asked to report only pain that lasted an entire day or more, excluding minor aches and pains. Low back pain was the most commonly reported of the four types of pain, the most common cause of job-related disability, and a leading contributor to missed work and reduced productivity. The second most frequently reported chronic pain type was severe headache and/or migraine.

Remember, you don’t have to live with pain and you don’t have to resign yourself to taking pain medications every day. Chiropractors are experts in managing pain - especially back pain, neck pain and headache pain, three of the most prevalent types of pain reported in the CDC study - without the use of drugs. For more information on the benefits of chiropractic care, visit www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/musculoskeletal.

“Health, United States, 2006.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, November 2006.

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Parents Don't Reduce Kids TV Time

Many U.S. parents agree that their kids should watch less television, but they also aren't certain how to set and enforce limits, says a study. Researchers at the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, RTI International in Research Triangle Park, N.C., and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta found children average five hours a day in front of televisions, computers and video games. "A stunning finding from this study -- given our concerns over obesity -- is the extent to which kids and families eat when they watch TV," said lead author Amy Jordan of the Annenberg Public Policy Center's Media and the Developing Child Project. Nearly half of those surveyed said they had a TV in the room where they have their meals, and preliminary research indicates that viewing while eating increases the consumption of energy-dense and less nutritious foods. Nearly two-thirds of the 180 children sampled had a television in their bedrooms. Some parents say they didn't limit TV for fear missing their own favorite programs, they depend upon the television to reduce bickering among their children, or that they relied on TV to entertain children while they were engaged in other household activities.

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Ways to Avoid Holiday Food

The holidays often mean large meals of tasty treats, but although many savor each bite, it can also mean holiday remorse, says a U.S. dietitian. Wahida Karmally, a registered dietitian at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center, says people can avoid holiday psychological turmoil by adopting a more sensible approach to holiday eating and exercise. "You will not gain weight from one meal by itself. Consistency is the key; if you eat healthful meals during the months before the holidays, a splurge or two can be fit in," she says. "Don't deny yourself the occasional treat." Karmally advises to adopt a "calorie bank" concept and save calories the week before to give yourself more calories to eat during the holidays. Snack on fruit, non-fat yogurt or vegetables before going to a party and never engage in conversation while sitting next to a platter of your favorite cookies, recommends Karmally.

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Exercise More Effective Than Gym Class

Researchers at Ohio State and Denison universities say traditional gym classes don't work for many students, but an exercise program does. The researchers developed and tested the new program in which students at a rural Ohio high school learned how to create a personalized exercise program. The students spent one gym class each week learning the skills necessary for planning a lifelong exercise program. Nearly half of the students said that they spent no time exercising outside of school prior to beginning the program, but the number dropped to less than one in 10 students once the program ended.

"These findings suggest that the program encouraged sedentary students to become active. Exercise doesn't have to be a strenuous, heart-pounding, sweat-inducing session that leads to exhaustion," said Rick Petosa of Ohio State University. "In fact, research shows significant health benefits can be gained when a sedentary person becomes moderately active." The findings appear in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

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Many Get Exercise via Chores, Leisure

Minnesota residents get much of their physical activity via chores such as yard work, cleaning or leisure activities such as walking, running or biking. Researchers at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health found that Twin Cities metro area residents are expending a significantly greater amount of energy participating in moderately intense physical activities than they were five years ago.

The study also found that the percentage of Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area residents who sit for the majority of their workday increased from 57.4 percent to 71.2 percent since 1980, while the number of people who lift things frequently and walk more than a half mile to work dropped significantly. "Physical activity has decreased over the past 20 years in the work place, which makes it more difficult for people to meet the recommendations for daily exercise," said Lyn Steffen of the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

"But people can help fill the gap by participating in physical activities that are part of a daily routine, such as walking their dog, climbing steps, walking, yard work and cleaning."

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Grip Not a Factor in Tennis Elbow

The grip of a player on a tennis racket is not a factor in whether or not a player may develop tennis elbow, according to Los Angeles researchers. Dr. George F. Hatch III of the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine conducted the study. "Clinicians who treat patients with tennis elbow often tell them to try a different size grip in order to alleviate muscle fatigue," says Hatch. "Our study demonstrates that those recommendations have no scientific basis.

Therefore, it is reasonable to recommend whatever grip size feels most comfortable for them." Tennis elbow, or lateral epicondylitis, is the most common upper extremity complaint among recreational players. Overuse, microtrauma and failed healing in both of can result in tendonitis, yet larger and smaller grip sizes did not affect the activity of these two muscles, according to the study published in the American Journal of Sports Medicine.

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Little Chocolate Can Lower Heart Risk

Just a few squares of chocolate a day can almost halve the risk of heart-attack death in some men and women, according to Baltimore researchers. The chocolate decreased the tendency of platelets to clot in narrow blood vessels, says Diane Becker of The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Bloomberg School of Public Health. "The chemical in cocoa beans has a biochemical effect similar to aspirin in reducing platelet clumping, which can be fatal if a clot forms and blocks a blood vessel, causing a heart attack," says Becker. Nonetheless, Becker cautions that her work is not intended as a prescription to gobble up large amounts of chocolate candy, which often contains diet-busting amounts of sugar, butter and cream.

However, as little as 2 tablespoons a day of dark chocolate -- the purest form of the candy made from the dried extract of roasted cocoa beans -- may be just what the doctor ordered, says Becker. The findings have been presented at the American Heart Association's annual Scientific Sessions in Chicago.

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Lack of B Vitamins Affect Performance

Active individuals lacking B vitamins -- including U.S. college athletes and other elite competitors -- may perform worse during high-intensity exercise. The B vitamins, including thiamin, riboflavin, vitamin B-6, B-12 and folate, are necessary during the body's process for converting proteins and sugars into energy. They are used during the production and repair of cells, including red blood cells. For active individuals a marginal deficiency in the nutrients may impact the body's ability to repair itself, operate efficiently and fight disease, according to Melinda Manore, researcher in the Colleges of Agricultural and Health and Human Sciences at Oregon State University. The changes in the body's tissues resulting from training, an increase in the loss of nutrients in sweat, urine and feces during and after strenuous activity and the additional nutrients needed to repair and maintain higher levels of lean tissue mass present in some athletes and individuals may all affect an individual's B vitamin requirements, said Manore. "Many athletes involved in highly competitive sports do not realize the impact their diets have on their performance," said Manore. "By the time they reach adulthood they can have seriously jeopardized their abilities and their long-term health." The study is published in the International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism.

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Good Dental Health Equals Good Health

Eighty-percent of U.S. adults connect good dental hygiene with good overall health, according to a survey. Seven in 10 adult consumers report making a visit to the dentist at least annually, with 47 percent of consumers saying they visit the dentist every six months, according to the survey by The Guardian Life Insurance Co. of America. Seventy-three percent of women compared to 66 percent of men surveyed visit the dentist on a regular basis at least once a year or more.

Lack of coverage is the reason given the most for why those without dental insurance limit their visits to the dentist. Among consumers without insurance, 73 percent said they don't visit the dentist regularly because they are without coverage. "Dental is perennially one of the most popular employee benefits," said John Foley, vice president, Group Dental, Guardian. "This is not surprising, especially with such a large percentage of the population now connecting oral hygiene with overall health."

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Ways to Cut Down on Holiday Stress

Crowded malls, trips to the airport and the constant shuffling of cookies and turkey out of the oven can lead to holiday stress, says a U.S. expert. The holidays may be the season of love and celebration, but sometimes holiday festivities can become overwhelming, according to Dr. Alan Manevitz, a psychiatrist at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center. "During the holidays, our lives become even more stressful as we try to juggle our usual responsibilities with extra holiday preparation and complicated family dynamics," says Manevitz. Manevitz advises:

1. Don't wait for the last minute to make plans.
2. Don't be a perfectionist about the holidays.
3. Prioritize the events that matter the most to you and your family.
4. Don't let competitiveness and perfectionism send you on too many shopping trips.
5. Simplify -- don't bake 20 different types of cookies unless you enjoy doing it.
6. Remember that family time can be both wonderful and anxiety-provoking.

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Ways to Avoid Night-Shift Weight Gain

A Los Angeles dietitian says night-shift workers have a tougher time maintaining weight because night work upsets the normal circadian rhythm. "Some night shift workers eat at work in order to maintain their stamina, then go home and eat with their families," said Netty Levine, a registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. "People working the night shift may consume large amounts of caffeine-laden beverages to stay awake, then, if they are parents they may be forced to stay awake during the day in order to drive their children to and from school and other activities." Studies have shown that people who do not get sufficient sleep are more prone to being overweight. Levine advises night-shift workers to exercise midway through their shift to help maintain alertness and overall cardiovascular health. She also recommends:

1. Eat small, regular meals w/ a balance of whole grain carbs, protein, and heart-healthy fats before 1am.
2. A frozen, low-fat, low-sodium frozen dinner can be supplemented with a piece of fruit, vegetables.
3. For snacks, bring fruit, vegetables, low-fat yogurt, cottage cheese, whole wheat crackers, pretzels or popcorn.
4. Avoid caffeine at least five hours before bedtime.

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Secondhand Smoke Affects Healthy Adults

Over time, inhaling secondhand smoke can cause otherwise healthy adults to develop chronic respiratory symptoms, says Margaret W. Gerbase of the University Hospitals of Geneva and 11 associates assessed the respiratory symptoms in 1,661 people who never smoked over an 11-year period. "The effects in asymptomatic never-smokers showed that exposure was associated with the development of respiratory symptoms," said Gerbase. Symptoms included wheezing, coughing, dyspnea -- shortness of breath -- and chronic bronchitis

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Mothers, Daughters View Body Differently

U.S. researchers found that a mother's and a daughter's view of the daughter's body image differed drastically, and it may contribute to child obesity. "Mothers and daughters have dissimilar perceptions about the daughter's body. While daughters usually see themselves accurately in terms of weight, their mothers tend to be more likely to visualize them as thinner than they are.

This may support a young girl's positive body image," said study leader Kellee Patterson of Columbus Children's Hospital's Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition. "But at the same time, it may limit a mother's ability to recognize a weight issue early in their daughter's life." Daughters ages 9 and 10 with low and normal Body Mass Index percentiles expressed satisfaction with their body size, but their mothers felt they were too thin. In higher BMI percentiles, the daughters appropriately felt they were too heavy, but their mothers felt they were near ideal weight.

If the mother was overweight, it made the daughters feel less satisfied with their body compared with girls whose mothers were normal weight. This could be interpreted to suggest that a daughter's self-perception is not influenced by her mother's view of her, but rather by her mother's body shape, according to the study.

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