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Newsletter

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Kick the Caffeine Habit

On any given night, millions of Americans have trouble sleeping. On any given afternoon, millions of Americans struggle to stay alert. The population is increasingly reaching for medications and stimulants to battle its sleep problems, often simultaneously – pharmaceuticals for the insomnia and caffeine for the daytime fatigue.

Unfortunately, neither solution can replace the recuperative and restorative powers of natural sleep. According to the National Institutes of Health, 30 percent to 40 percent of adults report some symptoms of insomnia within a given year; 10 percent to 15 percent report that it is a chronic condition. For millions, however, insomnia is “self-inflicted.” It is simply the result of poor choices in exercise and diet, including caffeine intake.

In addition to coffee, tea and colas, caffeine can be found in energy drinks, over-the-counter pain medicines and chocolate. Moderate amounts of caffeine ingested in the morning are sufficiently metabolized by bedtime – they won’t have a major impact on sleep.

However, substantial amounts of caffeine consumed later in the day will linger in the body well past the evening. Simply restricting caffeine intake after the noon hour could have dramatic effects on the ability to fall asleep at night and the ensuing quality of one’s sleep. It also may negate or reduce the need for sleep aids.

Talk to your doctor about any sleep-quality issues or sleep difficulties you may be experiencing. Your doctor can help pinpoint areas of concern and develop lifestyle habits that can keep you rested and rejuvenated for all life has in store for you.

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Chiropractic for Growing Bodies

Millions of parents take their children to the chiropractor regularly. That’s because children’s developing spines and bodies cope with the bumps and bruises of learning to walk, playing sports and just being a kid. The key to your child’s spinal health is to identify potential health issues early and intervene so those problems don’t follow them into adulthood. When children begin crawling, they start to develop the curve in their neck. They also start developing coordination in their arms and legs. As they move into walking, you start to see them using their limbs to balance and move upright. Early in their lives, you may be able to notice some of the following signs:

- + hunched shoulder on one side or both,
- + head turns to one side more than the other, and your child resists or becomes noticeably uncomfortable when you turn their head to the other side,
- + the hip and leg on one side kicks or moves differently than the other and/or, toes point inward or outward when your child walks or runs.

Many of these symptoms can cause problems with children’s bones, joints and muscles – problems that may not be detected or become painful for years to come. Chiropractors have long cared for children. Each day, thousands of children across the world receive adjustments from chiropractors. It’s a great way to relieve pain, restore function and keep them happy – the way children should be.

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When It Comes to Walking, It’s All Good

Walking is good, whether the outcome benefits blood pressure, joint problems cardiovascular disease diabetes, or mental health, says a U.S. expert. “Getting out there and taking a walk is what it’s all about,” Dr. James Levine, and a Mayo Clinic expert on obesity. “You don’t have to join a gym, you don’t have to check your pulse. You just have to switch off the TV, get off the sofa and go for a walk.” Physicians at Shinshu University Graduate School of Medicine in Matsumoto, Japan, determined that high-intensity interval walking may protect against high blood pressure and decreased muscle strength among older people, according to an editorial in the Mayo Clinic Proceedings. Over five months, the Japanese researchers studied 246 adults who engaged in either no walking or moderate to high-intensity walking. The group who engaged in high-intensity walking experienced the most significant improvement in their health, the researchers found. In his editorial, Levine says the study lends credence to the notion that walking is a legitimate, worthy mode of exercise for all people.

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Exercise Important for Diabetes Control

Staying active -- getting regular physical exercise, helps prevent and control diabetes, advises a U.S. expert. "If you have diabetes and want to exercise, it is possible," Dr. Stephen G. Rosen, chief of endocrinology & metabolism at Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia, said in a statement. He recommends for those living with diabetes, who wish to exercise, to not perform intense exercise without discussion with a personal physician, wear well-fitted shoes and light clothing and exercise after meals, if possible, to reduce the risk of hypoglycemia. Also warm-up, or stretch, prior to exercise, remember to drink regularly during exercise and build exercise tolerance. Diabetes affects 20.8 million in the United States, or about 7 percent of the population, reports the American Diabetes Association.

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Smoke in Cars Could Be Worse Than Bars

Anyone smoking just two cigarettes within a motor vehicle can expose fellow travelers to secondhand smoke well above U.S. government safety standards. Wayne Ott and Neil Klepeis, both of Stanford University, in California, calculated over 100 air change measurements involving smoking by keeping track of a number of independent variables like car speed, fan position, air conditioning setting and whether windows were open or closed.

The researchers calculated that in a car with the windows up and the air conditioning on maximum, after just two cigarettes, the exposure of smoke to a passenger would exceed the U.S. government levels by 20 percent. Even with a car's windows open, smoke particle concentrations were higher than levels measured in California bars before a state smoking ban enacted in the 1990's. "In other words, being in the car with a smoker under these conditions gives such a huge amount of particulates that you'll exceed what would be considered a safe level of exposure," Klepeis said in a statement. The study is published in the Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology.

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Children Choose Less Vegetables

A study of Canadian fifth-graders found they prefer larger portions of snacks and fast foods and smaller portions of vegetables than recommended. Researchers at Dalhousie University in Halifax showed nearly 5,000 children different portion sizes of various foods and snacks and asked them to indicate their usual portion size. More than 63 percent of the children chose portions of fries that were larger than American and Canadian dietary recommendations, with boys more than twice as likely as girls to select bigger portions, according to the study published in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association. "Significantly larger" portions for meat and chips were selected by about 78 percent of the children; however, 52 percent of the children chose vegetable portion sizes smaller than or equal to dietary guidelines. The researchers found children who ate at fast-food restaurants more than once per week were more likely to consider large portions of fries and small portions of vegetables to be "usual," as did children from socio-economically disadvantaged families and those who frequently ate while watching television.

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Lightening the Load

One of the fundamental pieces of any back-to-school ensemble is the backpack, and although they're practical, backpacks are a leading cause of back and shoulder pain for millions of children and adolescents. As students head back to school, the American Chiropractic Association (ACA) offers parents advice on preventing unnecessary backpack pain and injuries. The ACA offers the following checklist to help parents select the best possible backpack for their children:

- + Is the backpack the correct size for the child? The backpack should never be wider or longer than the child's torso, and the pack should not hang more than 4 inches below the waistline. A backpack that hangs too low increases the weight on the shoulders, causing the child to lean forward when walking.
- + Does the backpack have two wide, padded shoulder straps? Non-padded straps are not only uncomfortable, but also they can place unnecessary pressure on the neck and shoulder muscles.
- + Does the child use both straps? Lugging a heavy backpack by one strap can cause a disproportionate shift of weight to one side, leading to neck and muscle spasms, low-back pain and poor posture.
- + Are the shoulder straps adjustable? Shoulder straps should be adjustable so the backpack can be fitted to the child's body. The backpack should be evenly centered in the middle of the child's back.
- + Does the backpack have a padded back? A padded back not only provides increased comfort, but also protects the child from being poked by sharp edges on school supplies (pencils, rulers, notebooks, etc.) inside the pack.
- + Does the pack have several compartments? A backpack with individualized compartments helps position the contents most effectively. Make sure that pointy or bulky objects are packed away from the area that will rest on the child's back, and try to place the heaviest items closest to the body.

The ACA recommends that parents or guardians help children pack their backpacks properly, and they should make sure children never carry more than 10 percent of their body weight. For example, a child who weighs 100 pounds shouldn't carry a backpack heavier than 10 pounds, and a 50-pound child shouldn't carry more than 5 pounds. In addition, parents should ask their children to report any pain or other problems resulting from carrying a backpack. If the pain is severe or persistent, seek care from a health care professional, such as a doctor of chiropractic.

ACA – For more info visit www.amerchiro.org

Teens Prefer Dates to Cyberspace

Fifty-eight percent of U.S. teens sacrifice watching TV for going on dates and 54 percent choose a date over surfing the Internet, a survey found. However, “reality” only extends so far; when teens go out on dates, 53 percent eschew free options like cruising or school events for the marketing-laden options -- 87 percent choose to take dates to a movie theater, 64 percent choose malls and 58 percent choose restaurants, according to the survey of 750 teens by OTX, or Online Testing eXchange, for eCRUSH, a PG-13 social networking site. Sixty-six percent of all teens say their parents impose dating rules, but 49 percent of boys are subjected to rules, compared with 83 percent of girls. Jocks, bad boys and adventure seekers rule the hearts of today's teens, while 31 percent of all teens said they're attracted to “jocks” such as Nathan on the CW's “One Tree Hill” or Claire on NBC's “Heroes.” Thirty percent of girls also prefer “bad boys” like Michael on Fox's Prison Break and 28 percent of boys like adventurous women such as Veronica on the CW's Veronica Mars.

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Apologizing May Be Key to Marriage

Married adults are twice as likely as single, divorced or separated people to apologize to mates, even if they feel they are blameless, a U.S. survey found. This willingness to apologize may be key to a lasting marriage, suggests the survey of 7,590 U.S. adults by pollsters Zogby International for The Pearl Outlet.com. The survey found 64 percent of married people, and 67 percent of those in civil unions, said they apologize first even if they feel they are only partially to blame in an argument with their significant other. That compared to 40 percent of single people, and 42 percent of divorced, separated or widowed people.

“The secret of a lasting marriage is being prepared to accept that the other person has an equally valid viewpoint and therefore being willing to apologize, because you love them and want them to be happy,” said Andrew Marshall, author of “I Love You But I'm Not In Love With You: Seven Steps To Saving Your Relationship.” The poll has a margin of error of 1.1 percent.

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