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# Newsletter

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## Life Can Be a Pain without Chiropractic

That pain in your knee is often what doctors call patellofemoral pain syndrome (PFPS). Simple activities such as running, jumping, or going up and down stairs can contribute to knee pain, which means that most of us will eventually suffer from some form of PFPS.

It has been suggested that PFPS can be relieved by sufficient stretching and lengthening of tight structures around the patella (the kneecap). A study in the *Journal of the Neuromusculoskeletal System* investigated this potential intervention in 30 patients with PFPS.

Patients were divided into two groups: The first group received “patella mobilization” (extension of the knee with pressure and movement applied for 10 minutes, followed by patellar adjustment in the direction of restricted movement); the second group received detuned ultrasound as placebo (five minutes of ultrasound, but with the intensity set at zero).

Patients receiving mobilization had positive improvements in PFPS symptoms compared with the placebo group. The authors note that this type of conservative care may be useful when combined with other treatment options such as exercise, orthotics and activity modification. If you’re suffering from knee pain and would like to know more about nonsurgical approaches to relieving your pain, contact your doctor of chiropractic.

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Reference: Rowlands BW, Brantingham JW. The efficacy of patella mobilization in patients suffering from patellofemoral pain syndrome. *Journal of the Neuromusculoskeletal System* 1999; Vol. 7, No. 4, pp142-49.

## Holistic Health

There is no single cause of back pain, although many clinicians approach problems from a “mechanical” perspective (i.e., the spine or muscles around the spine aren’t functioning properly, which causes the pain). However, evidence suggests that a number of factors, including exercise, may be involved in the development of low back pain (LBP).

In a study designed to evaluate the short-term risk factors for new episodes of LBP, more than 2,500 adults (18-75 years old) completed a survey that gathered data on height, weight, nonoccupational physical activities (i.e., cycling, gardening, walking, etc.) and overall health. All subjects were free of current back pain; new episodes of LBP were documented in the 12 months following the survey. Self-reported poor general health (men and women) and being overweight (women only) proved to be the strongest predictors of low back pain. Overall, 34% of men and 37% of women reported new episodes of low back pain during the study period. And the moral to this story? Good health is more than just “fixing something when it’s broken”; it’s more than a single workout or a nutritious meal. If you’re interested in a comprehensive approach to health and wellness, make an appointment with a doctor of chiropractic.

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Reference: Croft PR, Papageorgiou AC, Thomas E, et al. Short-term physical risk factors for new episodes of low back pain. *Spine*, August 1, 1999; Vol. 24, No. 15, pp1556-1561.

## Some at Risk for Being Cell-Phone Addict

The average Australian spends one hour on his or her mobile phone every day, according to a Queensland University of Technology survey. Consumer-behavior expert Diana James said her online survey of 2,500 phone users found one in five Australians were potentially addicted to their cell phones. The survey also found 22 percent considered themselves to be heavy or very heavy users, and 8 percent had experienced monthly bills that were more than \$385. “The average respondent made 3.5 voice calls each day but sent nine text messages,” said James. “They spent one hour on the phone every day on average, which included 35 minutes of texting.” Time spent on cell phones was spent contacting close friends, partners or family members, with 11 percent of phone time relating to business, according to James. Danger signs for cell-phone addiction include running up huge bills and having irrational reactions to being without a cell phone.

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## Safety Education Can Make Home Safer

Home safety education, especially with free or low-cost equipment such as smoke detectors thrown in, can make British homes safer, a review found. However, there isn't enough evidence yet to know whether these home improvements lead to fewer child injuries, according to study leader Dr. Denise Kendrick of the University of Nottingham in London. One-on-one, face-to-face home safety education might be a boon to public health, since "in industrialized countries injuries are now the leading cause of death in childhood," Kendrick said. The reviewers analyzed 80 studies and found families who received the education were more likely to keep their tap water at a safe temperature, store medicines and cleaning products out of reach and have poison control center phone numbers at hand. Safety education seemed to work less well in other areas, such as safely storing matches, using window locks and non-slip bathmats and keeping a fire extinguisher in the house, according to the review published in The Cochrane Library.

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## Dieters Say They Feel They Are Starving

Fifty-six percent of U.S. adults feel there are times when they are "starving themselves to death" while on a diet, a survey finds. The survey by TSC, a division of Yankelovich, reports that at any one time during the year almost two-thirds of Americans are on a diet. The comprehensive consumer survey found that more than half of people surveyed felt they could do a better job of keeping their weight under control if they could go longer after eating a meal without being hungry. Additionally, one-third of respondents say that they feel hungry only three hours after eating breakfast, lunch or dinner. Seventy percent of U.S. women currently trying to diet said that the most important item of clothing that inspired them to lose weight was their jeans, the survey says.

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## Children Should Begin Heart-Healthy Habits

"The path to heart disease begins in childhood, so children should begin healthy-heart habits early," says a U.S. pediatric cardiologist. "It's important for children to adopt healthy heart habits early," said Dr. Thomas Klitzner of Mattel Children's Hospital at the University of California at Los Angeles. "The path to heart disease begins in childhood. Obesity and high blood pressure are becoming more prevalent in children and young adults. By introducing the concepts of regular exercise, good nutrition and avoiding smoking, children can make heart-healthy habits part of their lifestyle for the rest of their lives."

For a healthy heart, children and adolescents should:

- Watch no more than one hour of television a day -- including non-school-work-related computer activities and video games.
- Make a point of getting outside and being active for at least 30 minutes every day.
- Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Avoid fast food and fried food, and eat in moderation.
- Don't smoke.
- See your pediatrician for all regularly scheduled visits.

Report unusual feelings, such as a racing heart or feeling faint, to an adult.

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## Many Parents Don't Recognize Drug Abuse

Children as young as age 11 are experimenting with drugs and alcohol, but many U.S. parents don't recognize the signs of substance abuse. "The kids we treat have been using for quite some time before their parents figure it out," said Dr. Norma Clarke, medical director of the Menninger Adolescent Treatment Program. "They convince their parents that they are not using, because their parents don't want to believe they are using. Also primary care doctors often don't ask about drug use, and most psychiatrists don't ask." Doctors may diagnose the mood swings caused by drug use as symptoms of bipolar disorder or a mood disorder, preventing adolescent patients from getting the treatment they need. Spotting substance abuse in pre-teens can be tricky, Clarke says. Tell-tale signs of drug use include major changes in eating or sleeping, changes in friends, deteriorating relationships with family members, school problems, loss of interest in favorite activities, wild mood swings and chronic lying or stealing. Children who learn about the risks of drugs at home are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs, according to a 2005 study released by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America.

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## Take Child Homesickness Seriously

Many children whose separation from their parents is sudden and unplanned have moderate to severe homesickness that can interfere with functioning. Special care should be taken with children who are hospitalized for an indefinite amount of time, because even a casual remark by a physician or nurse about when the child might be able to go home can cause severe distress and even interfere with care if that date arrives and the child is still in the hospital, according to Christopher Thurber, the staff psychologist at Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. The report, published in the journal *Pediatrics*, gives parents and physicians specific guidance to help anticipate and lessen the distress that homesickness can cause among children and teens at summer camps, hospitals, boarding schools and colleges. The American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health sponsored the report hoping that physicians will add homesickness counseling to children's camp and school physicals, and to the care of hospitalized children. "For over 100 years camps and schools have patted homesick kids on the back, tried to keep them busy and hoped it will go away," said Thurber.

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## Exercise Can Trigger New Brain Neurons

Scientists believed older brains could not reverse brain shrinkage, but a U.S. study finds brisk walking can increase production of new brain neurons. Three hours of brisk walking per day can trigger biochemical changes that increase production of new brain neurons, according to researchers at University of Illinois. Another study shows that a structured exercise program may boost the physical well-being of sedentary seniors who are at risk of losing independent functioning, according to the Lifestyle Interventions and Independence for Elders pilot study. The findings are published in *The Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences*.

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## Many Teens Distracted Behind the Wheel

Most U.S. teens regularly drive while distracted by other passengers and cell phones, according to an insurance industry survey released Wednesday. Ninety percent of all teens said friends drive while talking or sending text messages on a mobile phone. An equal number say their friends speed.

The idea that teens are prone to driving distracted and at high rates of speed is not surprising. But researchers said they're beginning to understand teens' emotions may play a significant role.

"It distracts them. It makes them not make these good decisions," said Dr. Flaura K. Winston, co-scientific director of the Center for Injury Research and Prevention at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, which conducted the study. The survey asked 5,665 high school students about their and their friends' driving behaviors. A full 90 percent said they've seen friends drive while distracted by other teens in the car. Beyond that, teens love to speed.

"It's just terrible how addictive speed is when you get in that zone," said Steve Arends, who suffered a severe brain injury in a crash that killed his twin brother when the two were 17 years old in 2003. Winston said that one in five of teens surveyed said they've already been in a crash.

Overall, 16- to 19-year-old drivers have crash fatality rates four times higher than adults over 25, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The study was paid for by State Farm Insurance, which is lobbying for uniform graduated licensing laws nationwide that restrict new drivers' ability to drive with passengers or at night.

"As a business issue, this is something we really want to address," said Laurette Stiles, the company's vice president.

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## Microwaving Kitchen Sponges Kills Germs

Microwaving kitchen sponges and plastic scrubbers sterilizes them rapidly and effectively from bacteria and viruses, says a University of Florida researcher. "Basically what we find is that we could knock out most bacteria in two minutes," said study co-author Gabriel Bitton. "People often put their sponges and scrubbers in the dishwasher, but if they really want to decontaminate them and not just clean them, they should use the microwave." Bitton, Richard Melker and Dong Kyoo Park say the more than 90 percent of Americans with microwaves in their kitchens have a powerful weapon against *E. coli*, salmonella and other food-borne pathogens. Home kitchens are a common source of contamination, as pathogens from uncooked eggs, meat and vegetables find their way onto countertops, utensils and cleaning tools, according to Britton. Two minutes of microwaving on full power mode killed or inactivated more than 99 percent of all the living pathogens in the sponges and pads, although the *Bacillus cereus* spores required four minutes for total inactivation, according to the study published in the *Journal of Environmental Health*. People should microwave their sponges according to how often they cook, with every other day being a good rule of thumb, suggests Bitton.

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## Men Also at Risk for Osteoporosis

A Canadian researcher says osteoporosis isn't just a woman's problem; the bone-wasting disease can severely afflict men as well. To overcome this common perception, Dr. Aliya A. Khan, a professor of clinical medicine at McMaster University, led a group of five Canadian experts in the development of guidelines for the diagnosis, treatment and management of osteoporosis in men. Khan said the guidelines are intended to make physicians aware of the fact that they can no longer overlook diagnosing osteoporosis in their male patients. "That's the bottom line," said Khan. "We want to bring all the research we have to the forefront and we want to bring it to the desk of Canadian physicians." Until now, doctors have underestimated how common the condition is in men -- one in eight men over age 50 has osteoporosis, compared to one in four women after menopause, according to Khan. "The problem is that when men sustain fractures they are more likely to die or suffer a disability," says Khan.

The guidelines are published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal.

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## Fast Food Limits Healthy Food Intake

Families whose meals frequently consist of fast food are more likely to have unhealthy eating habits and higher risk for obesity, says a U.S. study. "Fast food can be a convenient alternative to cooking for busy families," said lead author Kerri Boutelle of the University of Minnesota Medical School. "But, frequently making fast food a family meal can negatively affect food choices in the house and the overall health of the family." Fifty-one percent of families in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area reported eating fast food as a family meal one to two times a week, while 7 percent said they had fast food three to four times a week, according to the study published in Public Health Nutrition. For teens and parents, higher frequency of fast food meals was associated with eating significantly fewer fruits and vegetables and drinking less milk. More fast food for dinner also meant pantry shelves were stocked with more salty snacks and soda. Parents who ate fast food often were more likely to be overweight than those who ate it less. "There are other options for fast meals that can be prepared at home and contain healthy foods, such as vegetables," said Boutelle. "Limiting fast food intake at home is one way families can attempt to improve eating habits and the overall health of the family."

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