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Newsletter

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Less Family Conflict if Teens in Activities

Organized youth activities help teens develop independence without conflict and distancing from their families, finds a U.S. study. University of Illinois researchers say teens in the study -- who were part of organized youth activities -- learned to speak up for themselves, developed social confidence, worked with peers toward a goal or as part of a team, and learned how to regulate their emotions, according to the study published in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*.

“Participation in these groups can make the teen passage smoother for everyone,” said Reed Larson of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. “When parents negotiate teen independence around such issues as going to parties, messy rooms, or the choice of a girlfriend or boyfriend, it’s rarely a win-win situation.”

Teens also reported that participating in the activities made them feel closer to their families, which runs counter to what we’ve come to expect of family relationships during adolescence, according to Larson. “In the past, experts have thought that tension and family conflict were necessary during adolescence so that teens can separate from their families,” said Larson. “But research shows that teens who have more conflict with their parents continue to have struggles and don’t do as well in adulthood.”

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Communicate with Your Chiropractor

Whether you’re fighting through traffic, paying the monthly bills, dealing with the noisy next-door neighbor or struggling with illness or disease, it can all add up to a considerable amount of stress. Stress is basically what we feel whenever we are faced with a difficult, unpleasant or challenging situation, and the way we deal with all this stress can substantially influence our overall health and well-being. If stress is affecting your life, it’s time to make an appointment with a doctor of chiropractic. Here’s why: A study in *JMPT* examined the contribution of stress as a potential disease trigger among 138 chiropractic patients attending one of 10 chiropractic clinics. Patients completed two questionnaires that asked about how their current stress affected their ability to function emotionally, mentally and physically. Results showed that nearly one in three patients viewed their lives as moderately to severely stressful, and more than 50% felt that stress had a moderate or severe impact on their current health problem. 71% of the patients said that it would be helpful if their chiropractic care included strategies to help them cope with stress. Chiropractic care might be just what you need to help relieve some of that stress in your life. And remember, evidence suggests that low back pain, a condition that chiropractors are experts at managing, may be caused or worsened by stress. So talk to your chiropractor about stress and about all of your health care needs.

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Children Snacking in Groups Eat More

Children snacking in large groups eat almost 1/3 more than when snacking with a couple of friends. Researchers analyzed eating behaviors of 54 children between ages 2 and 6 when they were in a group of nine children and when they were in a group of three. Each child was given a standard snack, and the amount consumed on each occasion was weighed. Time taken to eat it was also assessed. Observations took place in the classroom, supervised by teachers. Children ate slightly more in the larger groups when the snacking time was less than 11 minutes. But when snacking went on for longer, children in the larger groups ate 30 percent more than children eating in small groups, irrespective of the time they took over their snacks, according to the study published in the *Archives of Disease in Childhood*.

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Children Gain More Weight Out of School

Many are critical of U.S. schools having unhealthy lunches and too little physical education, but children gain more weight during summer vacation.

A nationwide study by Ohio State University researchers found that one measure of obesity rose more than twice as fast when kindergarten and first-grade students were on summer vacation than when they were in school. The researchers also say that obese children were helped most by being in school: They gained weight no faster than other children did during the school year. It was only during the summer that overweight children gained weight more quickly than average.

“We really can’t blame schools for the rise in childhood obesity,” said study co-author Paul von Hippel of OSU. “The problem is primarily outside of schools.” The study appears in the April issue of the American Journal of Public Health.

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Many Fib to Get Date Online

Those seeking love online, or at least a date, usually fib about either their height or weight, and sometimes their age, says a U.S. study.

Using a new method that measured the actual difference between profile information and reality, men systematically overestimated their height, while women more commonly underestimated their weight, said lead author Jeffrey Hancock, a communications expert. “Surprisingly, age-related deception was minimal and did not differ by gender.” About 52.6 percent of the men in the study lied about their height, as did 39 percent of the women, said Hancock.

Sixty-four percent of women lied about their weight compared to 60 percent of the men. When it came to age, 24.3 percent of the men were untruthful, compared with 13.1 percent of the women. What constituted a lie? For height, the discrepancy had to be greater than half an inch; for weight, the deviation had to be greater than 5 pounds; and for age, there had to be a difference of a year. The findings are scheduled to be published in the Proceedings of Computer/Human Interaction in April.

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Reducing Toothbrush Germs

The Pennsylvania Dental Association says good toothbrush care can help maintain good oral hygiene and reduce the amount of germs in a person’s mouth.

A person’s mouth is home to hundreds of various types of germs, or microorganisms, that can jump onto a toothbrush, not just during use, but in between uses. For example, a toothbrush may be home to bacteria before being removed from the box, as manufacturers are not required to sell them in sterile packaging, says the PDA.

For proper care of a toothbrush the PDA suggests:

- Do not share toothbrushes because cold, flu or infection can be passed from person to person via the toothbrush.
- Rinse toothbrushes after use to remove toothpaste and debris.
- Store a toothbrush in an upright position and allow it to air dry
- do not cover toothbrushes or store them in a closed container because this helps to provide a moist environment for germs to grow.
- Separate multiple toothbrushes.
- Replace toothbrush every three months and a child’s toothbrush more often.

Motherhood Spark Healthier Lifestyle

A majority of U.S. women increase their focus on health, fitness and nutrition once they become mothers. Approximately 65 percent of women exercise more or try to exercise more since becoming mothers, and 82 percent reported eating healthier, according to BabyCenter LLC, an online resource for expectant parents. “We found that becoming a mom is a catalyst for getting healthy. Women begin making diet and exercise changes during pregnancy, and those changes stay with them long after the baby is born,” said Linda Murray, editor in chief of BabyCenter.

“In our survey, three out of four women say they change their eating habits during pregnancy and after their kids are born, and more than half say they exercise more since becoming moms.” At least 55 percent of pregnant moms exercised on their own while their child was occupied or in the care of others, while 41 percent exercised with their child in or out of the home.

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Vitamin D May Reduce Falls in Elderly

Seniors in a nursing home taking a high daily dose of vitamin D experienced 72 percent fewer falls compared to those taking a placebo, says a U.S. study. Approximately 50 percent of nursing-home residents fall every year, and those who are injured become even more prone to future falls, according to study authors Kerry Broe and Douglas Kiel of the Hebrew SeniorLife Institute for Aging Research at Harvard University. "Past studies have shown that vitamin D could help prevent falls in seniors, and may be due to a possible strengthening effect the vitamin has on the musculoskeletal system," say Broe and Kiel. "Until now, we didn't know what dosage amount would be effective." The dose that was most effective, 800 International Units per day, is higher than the dose typically prescribed to seniors. Taking this dose of vitamin D should be done only through the approval of a patient's doctor and certain conditions, such as high blood calcium levels, need to be considered by a physician, the study authors stressed. Taking vitamin D only may not result in fall reductions and all preventative measures need to be considered, according to the study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society.

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Heart Health Should Be a Priority

Women should not give up on the American Heart Association's new heart guidelines if they seem unattainable, says a U.S. cardiologist. Dr. Thriveni Sanagala of the Loyola University Health System in Maywood, Ill., advises women that if 60 to 90 minutes of daily exercise is not possible, try 10- to 15-minute segments.

"Many women cannot imagine finding an extra 90 minutes every day for themselves," she says. "The most important thing is don't disregard all the guidelines if you cannot meet a few; the new guidelines are a very important challenge and well worth it." To reduce their risk of heart attack, women should be as meticulous about checkups for their heart as they are about scheduling their Pap test or mammogram, according to Sanagala. Blood pressure, cholesterol, fasting plasma glucose and body mass index should be checked because abnormal levels are risk factors for heart disease.

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Serious Injuries in Young Athletes Rising

Serious injuries in young athletes are occurring at a higher rate and at a younger age, according to a U.S. study. Forty percent of all emergency visits are for sports injuries in children age 5 to 14, according to Dr. Mininder S. Kocher, spokesperson for the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons and of Children's Hospital in Boston. Kocher rarely saw patients entering high school that had already had shoulder injuries serious enough to require surgery, but now most of the post-middle and junior high group he sees have had shoulder surgery.

Several studies have found a high incidence of chronic elbow and shoulder injuries in young pitchers. Approximately 60 percent of 11- to 18-year-olds have had an injury due to the repetitive motion and overuse of the elbow and shoulder. Little to no attention is being paid to what type of pitches and throws a young player is being asked to make or the number he or she is making in a game or practice session, says Kocher. These types of "overuse" injuries are also found with gymnasts, according to Kocher. The results were presented at a pediatric sports injury symposium at the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons annual meeting at the San Diego Convention Center.

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Relaxation Response Can Reduce Stress

Exercises that elicit the "relaxation response" can help the body erase the cumulative effects of stress, according to a U.S. report. "Stress Management: Techniques for Preventing and Easing Stress," a report from Harvard Medical School, explains that stress has been linked with such physical problems as heart attack, stroke, gastrointestinal problems and asthma, as well as emotional problems such as depression, anxiety, and an inability to enjoy life. The relaxation response -- the opposite of the stress response -- is a state of profound rest and release. A number of physiological changes occur during the relaxation response -- heartbeat and respiration slow down, the body uses less oxygen and produces less carbon dioxide, and blood pressure tends to stabilize in healthy individuals and drop significantly in people with hypertension. Meditation is only one way to elicit the relaxation response. Other methods include deep breathing exercises, yoga, tai chi and repetitive prayer. What's crucial is that a person interrupt everyday thoughts by focusing on a word, phrase, prayer, or repetitive muscular activity once or twice a day, for a total of 10 to 20 minutes daily, the report says.

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Child Homesickness Should Be Taken Seriously

Many U.S. 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 lead author 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 authors, and the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health that sponsored the report, hope 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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Workers Who Lift Need More Breaks

Workers who lift for a living need to take longer or more frequent breaks to avoid back injury, says an Ohio State University study. The study also suggests that people who are new on the job need to take breaks even more often than experienced workers, and that the risk of injury is higher at the end of a work shift, according to William Marras, professor of industrial welding and systems engineering. People who participated in the study lifted boxes onto conveyor belts for eight hours, while researchers measured the amount of oxygen that was reaching the muscles in their lower back. The oxygen level indicated how hard the muscles were working and whether they were becoming fatigued, said Marras. Despite the fact that the study participants were performing the same job at the same pace all day, their back muscles needed more oxygen as the day went on. Taking a half-hour lunch break helped their muscles recover from the morning's exertion, but once they started working again, their oxygen needs rose steeply and kept climbing throughout the afternoon, according to the study published in the journal *Clinical Biomechanics*.

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US Adults Eating More Heart Healthy

Participants in the Minnesota Heart Survey have been eating better over the past two decades, say researchers at the University of Minnesota. The study of more than 5,000 men and 6,000 women found the participants ate more fruit, vegetables, total grains and whole grains; and less saturated fatty acid, trans fatty acid, total fat, cholesterol and alcohol.

However, the researchers found continuing areas of concern in the study participants' diets over two decades: unfavorable sodium and fish consumption and a continuous deterioration in overall "energy balance" -- in other words, consuming more calories than burned. "Results suggest that efforts to improve diet for (coronary heart disease) prevention should include a focus on moderating energy and sodium intake while encouraging increased consumption of fish," the researchers write in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*.

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Snow Shoveling Hard on Body

Men and women over the age of 45 who are not physically active should take extreme caution when it comes to shoveling snow, advises a U.S. expert.

"The heart is a muscle like any other muscle in your body," said Dr. Susan Wainwright of the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia. "When it gets strained, it shuts down because it can't handle the increased load. Older adults who aren't that active tax their cardiovascular system when they start to shovel, and this results in heart attacks. You have to remember that shoveling is hard work and you should take every precaution to not get injured or even worse." The back is not meant to do this type of activity -- the back is supposed to be stable so that the arms and legs can move appropriately, according to Wainwright.

"You have to lift with the arms and legs, and then twist with the arms and legs," she said. "Injuries occur when people lift and twist with their backs." Shoveling snow can also be fatal -- numerous individuals suffer heart attacks from the strain of lifting snow, said Wainwright.

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