

MAY 2009

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## SAFE in the SWIM

Swimming is fun for people of all ages and abilities. Following are some safety tips to think about as you splash splash your way to cool fun and fitness.



If you don't know how to swim, you're missing one of life's great pleasures. To find a swimming class near you, contact your local Red Cross chapter or municipal pool – sign up the kids too.

**Buddy up – don't swim alone** even in your own pool. In public areas, swim where a lifeguard is on duty. Always watch children closely when they're in or near the water.

**Don't mix alcohol and water activities.** Avoid alcohol whether you're sunning on a boat or swimming laps. It is a cause of many drownings.

**Don't dive – walk into water.** To avoid injury, never dive in, even in a diving area or from the pool edge. Unlike competition pools, a residential pool is usually too shallow, while lakes and oceans may deepen abruptly or conceal hazards. If you have a diving board, experts advise you to remove it – to avoid serious risk.

**Feet first at water parks.** Always go down slides feet first and face up. Read the rules – precautions vary depending on the activity.

**Watch where you're swimming.** Stay clear of motorboats, jet skis and other motorized watercraft. Remain in designated swimming areas. Never swim under anything.

**Not a swimmer?** Stay in the shallow end (water level should be lower than your chest). Never go into or on the water without a life jacket or personal flotation device (PFD).

**Learn CPR.** Studies show CPR performed by bystanders until paramedics arrive improves drowning victims' chances of surviving.

**Always wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket or PFD on boats, kayaks, water skis – anything that floats – regardless of swimming ability or age.**

### MAY GOAL:

Don't like solo exercise? Grab a friend or co-worker and walk, bike or jog together.



### HEALTH notes

■ **Telling your dentist about your medications is a lifesaver.** Researchers found that reviewing drug history before even simple dental procedures saved patients' lives. Certain drugs, such as blood thinners, can cause excessive bleeding during many dental procedures. Before any dental procedure, give your dentist a list of all your prescription and over-the-counter drugs and your medical history. Discuss the pros and cons of the dental treatment, and ask if your dentist's office has a plan for medical emergencies. *Note:* If you have excessive bleeding or bruising after surgery, contact your dentist immediately.

■ **How often does your heart skip a beat?** Your heart may race or skip a beat due to emotions or exercise. If it happens often or causes symptoms, you may have chronic heart arrhythmia. It is caused by heart disease, or excessive use of tobacco, alcohol, caffeine, or stress. Without proper care, it could lead to stroke or sudden cardiac arrest. Talk to your provider if you pass out, feel rapid thumping in your chest, feel tired or lightheaded, experience shortness of breath or chest pain. Your provider may do further testing to determine proper treatment.

■ **Never touch the T Zone!** That's the message from the Henry the Hand Foundation, a nonprofit devoted to educating the public about hand washing to prevent illness. The T Zone represents your eyes, nose and mouth, where bacteria and other germs love to grow. Putting a finger in your eye, nose or mouth is the most common way to catch infectious diseases, such as the flu and gastrointestinal bugs. **So remember – hands off!**

**MORE INFO** ▶ HTH Foundation: [www.henrythehand.com](http://www.henrythehand.com)

# VACATION at its BEST

**You've earned a vacation.** Time to do whatever you want, or do nothing at all but enjoy a change of routine. Here's how to make the most of it:

**Plan it.** Craving adventure and excitement? A week in the wilderness or an exotic locale may provide the change of pace you need. How about a bike tour, canoeing, or a healthy cooking workshop with friends?

But if you're ready for pure rest and relaxation, a low-key vacation – one that won't take lots of energy or cash – might provide the most pleasure now.

**Allow enough time to get ready for travel.** All the extra effort of leaving home – errands, shopping, packing and preparing for your absence – can be strenuous and stressful if you have to rush. What fun is that?

**Stay flexible.** Expect the unexpected, such as lost luggage, long lines, mixed-up reservations or delays, especially if you fly. Make it easy on yourself; relax and be patient.

**Do a few things well.** Trying to do and see too much on vacation can leave you exhausted. Prioritize your time to avoid overload. If you have children, be sensitive to their limitations, too.

*Tip:* Fit in your exercise routine and some walks. Staying physical will help you avoid weight gain and improve sleep and energy.

A long-anticipated vacation probably will not be perfect or transform your life. But it can reward your hard work with fun, relaxation and a renewed spirit.



## Mental Health Workout

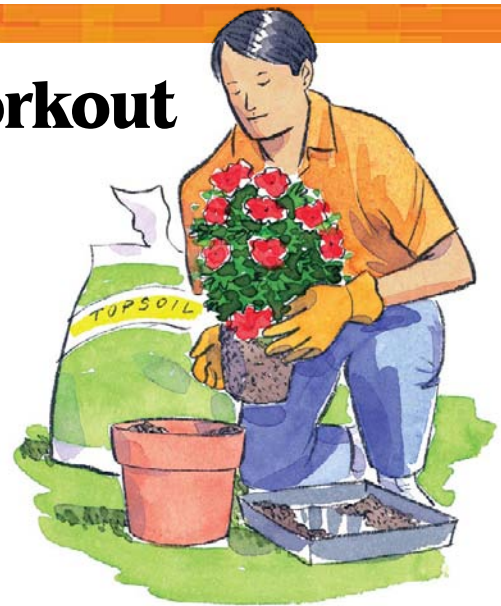
**Y**ou know exercise builds fitness and fights disease. But it also has the power to improve your mental well-being. Several studies link regular exercise to positive self-esteem, better mood, and decreased risk of depression.

### How much exercise will make a difference in your mental health?

According to a University College London (UCL) study, 30 minutes of daily moderate-intensity activity 5 days per week is recommended to help protect both mental and physical health.

**What kind of activity?** Any daily physical activity is beneficial. Of the 19,842 men and women in the UCL study, those who participated in sports experienced a 33% reduction in distress and those who did light domestic tasks, such as gardening or housework, showed a 15%-20% improvement.

**What about depression?** Although scientists don't fully understand how exercise relieves depression, research suggests exercise releases mood-elevating chemicals. But exercise may simply offset depression by raising your sense of well-being and confidence and providing enjoyment and distraction from worries. It can also relieve stress and improve sleep.



**Research suggests physical activity also helps improve mental ability.** Studies have found active people have a better quality of life because they can perform routine chores and activities more easily; they are more alert and better able to learn; and are more likely to live independently.

Walking, swimming, biking, lifting weights – whatever activity you prefer, regular physical activity relieves the stress and strain of today's busy, ever-changing world.

## Self Assessment: TEETH GRINDING

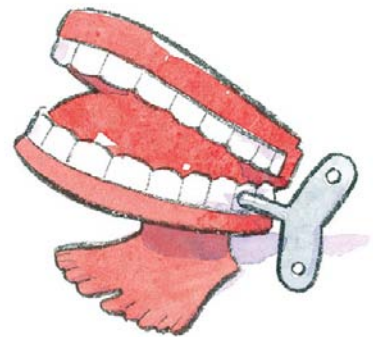
By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

**A**re you in the habit of grinding, gnashing or clenching your teeth? You may have *bruxism*, a condition that can develop when you unconsciously clench and grind your teeth together, either awake or asleep. Bruxism can become serious enough to hurt your teeth, jaw and mouth tissues. The cause is often related to unrelieved stress and tension.

**Do you have bruxism? Check the statements that are true.**

### Signs and symptoms:

- My teeth sometimes grind together or clench.
- My grinding may happen during the night or day.
- My sleep partner has heard me grinding.
- My dentist says my teeth show a lot of wear and tear.
- My tooth enamel is very worn.
- My teeth are overly sensitive.
- My jaw muscles often feel tense.
- My jaw joint feels sore or painful.
- My head, face or ears are painful or achy.



### Factors that increase risk:

- My bite is poorly aligned (malocclusion).
- I am frequently stressed, anxious, frustrated or angry.
- I have an aggressive, competitive or hyperactive personality.
- I often drink alcohol or caffeinated beverages in the evening.
- I have Parkinson's or Huntington's disease.
- I take an anti-depressant.

If you have risk factors or symptoms, talk to your provider or dentist. Untreated, severe bruxism damages teeth and jaws and loosens or destroys dental work such as bridges and crowns.

**Treatment can halt progressive damage.** Your dentist may prescribe a custom mouth guard or splint, or correct misaligned teeth. Also consider exercise and counseling to deal with stress.

The result may be longer-lasting teeth and jaws.

From the Physician

## 7 Reminders About Taking Your Medicine

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP



**M**edicine can save lives, fight disease and help you feel better if you're sick. Used incorrectly, however, drugs are potentially hazardous. They can create side effects, or interact with food or other medications. That's why it's important to work with your provider to make smart, safe use of your medicine.

- 1** *Bring your medicine to every provider visit*, or take a record of all the medicines you're taking, including dietary supplements, over-the-counter drugs and prescriptions. Write down the drug name, dose, purpose and dates of use.
- 2** *Keep your provider informed* about current and past health conditions and treatments; if you are pregnant or breastfeeding; or have any drug allergies.
- 3** *Ask your provider questions*. Learn the name of any new medicine and why you need to take it. How often should you take it? What are the side effects? What do you do if problems occur?
- 4** *Learn about cost*. Ask about less expensive options such as generic drugs.

- 5** *Ask about non-drug treatments* for your condition, including exercise, diet and weight loss.
- 6** *Get to know your pharmacist*. Fill all your prescriptions at the same drugstore. Ask about side effects and interactions with your other medicines. Make sure you have the right medicine and understand the directions before you leave the pharmacy.
- 7** *Organize your medicine at home*. Use a pillbox to sort your medications. Mark start and stop dates on your calendar. Pick up refills before you run out.

In addition, don't share old medicines with other people. Ask your pharmacist about safe disposal.

## 3 Things Your Exercise Plan Needs

**M**any people don't get regular exercise. The most common reasons why are lack of time, enjoyment, and knowledge about how to exercise. Sound familiar? Here's how to get exercise on your side, for good.

**Commitment** – You'd like to exercise more. Yet it's so easy to skip it. *Solution:* Visualize all the pluses, like more energy and confidence or appearance, not to mention dozens of health benefits.

**Short on time?** Ask yourself what you'd be doing if you weren't walking or biking or lifting weights. Surfing the Web? Watching TV? Are those sedentary activities as beneficial as exercising?

**Specific Goals** – Without realistic targets you may start gung ho down a path you cannot stay on, and fall off. *Solution:* Identify the results you want – muscle strength and toning, stretching to ease backache, or aerobic activities to lose weight. **List 3 specific targets:**

- 1** Choice(s) for physical activity.

- 2** How often you will fit your choice(s) into your schedule.
- 3** The *amount of time you can manage* – even as little as 2 10-minute dumbbell sessions in the first 2 weeks.

**Pleasure** – There are plenty of boring ways to exercise. In fact, the word "exercise" is a de-motivator for many people. *Solution:* List some options that will get you up off your chair and moving, such as dance class, walking your dog or swimming.

Base your plan on variables such as weather, work, travel and domestic obligations.



## Does Your Home Need Fresh Air?

It's easy to forget the air in our homes can be more polluted than outdoor air. Routine activities such as cooking, cleaning, remodeling, heating and cooling pollute indoor air.

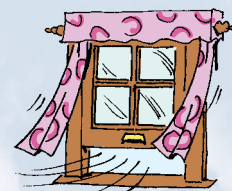
Mould, carbon monoxide, dust mites, and animal dander are common indoor air pollutants. Sources include gas-powered appliances, fireplaces, wood-burning stoves, pets, candles, carpets, bedding, furniture and household cleaners.

**Is your home struggling to breathe?** Check for these signs that your home is short of breath:

- Air is stuffy and smells stale.
- Moisture runs down windows. (If you have a humidifier check to see if it's set too high.)
- A gas flame is yellow instead of blue (except in a natural gas fireplace).
- The pilot light in a gas appliance keeps going out.
- You smell exhaust gases (carbon monoxide is odourless).

### Clear the air ...

Open doors and windows, weather permitting. Run kitchen and bathroom fans and ban smoking indoors.



### And spring into cleaning:

- Keep central air systems clean and maintained.
- Have fireplaces and the furnace inspected routinely; replace furnace filters often.
- Keep your home dry to reduce mould growth. Fix leaks and run exhaust fans in bathrooms to reduce moisture.
- Clean weekly to control dander and dust mites; vacuum and dust; wash bedding in hot water; and keep pets out of bedrooms.

**Reactions to bad indoor air** include aggravated asthma, headaches, fatigue, fever, sneezing, dizziness and eye, nose and throat irritation. If you feel better when you aren't home, indoor pollutants may be responsible.

**Keep those questions and suggestions coming!**

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# Fishing for Seafood Facts

**F**ish and shellfish supply healthy fats, but also contain contaminants. What do experts say about the benefits of eating seafood regularly? Are there any major risks? Challenge your knowledge about fish – is it seaworthy? **FACT or FICTION?**

## Seafood nutrients are a source of omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin D.

**FACT** – The omega-3 fats in seafood are known to protect heart health. They lower blood pressure and triglycerides; help prevent blood clots; and reduce the risk for irregular heart rhythms and sudden death. Vitamin D helps protect bones. Fish also supply lean protein and the mineral selenium.

## Mercury in seafood poses a serious risk to our health.

**FICTION** – When seafood is consumed at recommended levels, no consistent health risks to adults have been detected in recent studies. (*JAMA* 10/18/06) But the government warns young children (ages 1-11) and women of child-bearing age to avoid fish higher in mercury. Shark, swordfish, and tuna (fresh or frozen): 1 meal a month maximum – 150g for women and 75-125g for children.

## Eating seafood is associated with decreased risk of death from any cause.

**FACT** – Adults who regularly consume fish are 36% less likely to die from a heart attack, on average, and 17% less likely to die from any cause. The chances of stroke, depression and



dementia also decrease in people who include fish in their diet. *Note:* Choose seafood that is low in mercury and other toxins (examples follow).

## It's safe to eat more than 1 serving a week of some seafood species.

**FACT** – You can safely eat 2 servings a week of those seafood species that generally test low in mercury, including: wild salmon (fresh or canned), canned light tuna, shrimp, sardines, herring, tilapia, crab meat, imitation crab meat, scallops, mussels and clams.

## Optimum fish intake is 3-4 3-ounce/85-gram servings a week.

**FICTION** – Canada's Food Guide recommends eating at least 2 servings (1 serving = ½ cup /125ml/75 grams) of fish a week. Studies show benefits far outweigh risks when eaten at this amount.

## Recipe of the Month

# Shrimp & Cannellini

**Fast, one-dish meal full of beans!**

- 2 tbsp/29ml olive oil
- ½ tsp/2.5ml minced garlic
- ¼ tsp/.45g crushed red pepper
- 2 14 oz/398ml cans cannellini (white) beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 large ripe tomato, diced
- ½ cup/119ml fat-free, reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1 pound/454g medium shrimp, shelled and deveined
- 3 tbsp/8g fresh basil, chopped
- 3 tbsp/11g fresh parsley, chopped
- 3 tbsp/44ml fresh lemon juice

- 1 In large skillet heat oil over medium temp.
- 2 Add garlic and crushed red pepper; cook, stirring frequently about 2 minutes.
- 3 Add beans, tomato and broth; cook until heated through, 2-3 minutes.
- 4 Add remaining ingredients and cook, stirring gently, until shrimp turn pink and curl slightly, about 2 minutes.

*Serving suggestions:* Serve warm or cool on a bed of romaine or spinach leaves.

## Nutrition Facts

Makes 3 servings (½ cups/355ml each).

Amount Per Serving	Calories	418
	Protein	32g
	Total Fat	9.7g
	Total Carb	35g
	Fibre	9g
	Sodium	551mg