

TOP HEALTH[®]

The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter



NEW ENGLAND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS COMPANY

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HAPPY TRAILS

Hiking is walking with extra oomph: Trekking up and down terrain while carrying a backpack is weight-bearing exercise that builds bones in addition to burning calories. *Here's how to keep it healthy and safe:*

BEFORE YOU GO Become familiar with the hiking area and know where you're going. Choose hikes you can physically manage.

- Tell a friend or family member about your plans and when you intend to return.
- Pack enough food for a meal as well as energy-boosting carbohydrate snacks. **Good choices:** energy bars, granola, trail mix and dried fruit.



- Bring essentials: a basic first-aid kit, map, compass, pocketknife, lightweight flashlight, a whistle or flare and waterproof matches.

WHAT TO WEAR Dress in layers for comfort. Wear sunglasses and a hat or visor, and always wear sunscreen.

HOW TO GO Start out slowly and gradually increase your speed. **Guide:** Let the slowest person in your group set the pace.

- Stop frequently to rest. Tired muscles can lead to strain and injuries as the hike progresses.
- Use only marked trails. **For kids:** Pass out whistles so children can signal for help if they become separated or lost.

And bring plenty of water, up to one to two quarts per person per day, to keep everyone refreshed and ready to go.

Test Your Stroke IQ

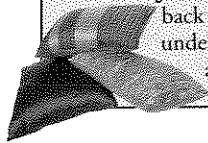
Did you know that stroke affects four out of five people — either you or someone you know? Check your knowledge about this life-threatening event. Knowing these surprising facts could save your life or the life of someone you love. **True or false:**

- 1 Stroke is also known as a "brain attack."
- 2 Stroke is an old person's worry.
- 3 There are ways to tell if someone's having a stroke.
- 4 Stroke is the leading cause of adult disability.
- 5 Once a stroke starts, it can't be stopped.
- 6 You can't prevent stroke.

See back for answers.

THE 2-PILLOW TRICK

Can't sleep because of back pain? **Try this trick from the American Physical Therapy Association:** Lie on your back with a pillow under your head and neck and a small pillow under your knees. This can help keep your spine naturally aligned so you feel less pain and sleep more soundly.



Slimmer Summer Salads

Ounce for ounce, a summer salad can be low in calories yet loaded with nutrition. But if you pile on ingredients such as blue cheese, avocado or creamy dressing, that "slim" salad can serve up loads of extra calories and grams of fat. **Keep salads healthful:**

Start with dark leafy greens.

Lettuce, spinach and mustard leaves can give you plenty of folic acid, vitamins and lutein, an antioxidant.

Add protein. Choose from lean items such as grilled chicken or salmon, hard-boiled eggs, black beans and chickpeas. Avoid fried or crispy foods.

Pile on fresh veggies. For less than 25 calories a serving, you can get vitamin C, potassium, folic acid, fiber and a variety of antioxidants.

Pick a rainbow of colors: bell peppers, shredded carrots, onions, mushrooms, radishes, broccoli and cauliflower.

Dress lightly. Stick to low-calorie or low-fat dressings, or try mixing one to two tablespoons of light extra-virgin olive oil with vinegar and fresh lemon juice.

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DR. ZORBA'S LONGEVITY CORNER

TO STENT OR NOT TO STENT?

Landmark research recently published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* calls into question many of the angioplasties and stent placements performed today to clear clogged arteries and prop them open. The study showed that patients who made healthy lifestyle changes and had intensive cholesterol-lowering drug therapy, great blood pressure control and an aspirin a day did just as well as those who had their blockages surgically reversed. What does this mean for you? If your health care provider recommends a stent, ask whether it's really necessary. It's also further evidence that taking care of yourself can be powerful medicine.

Is Alternative Medicine for You?

Acupuncture. Herbal supplements. Chiropractic. Maybe you've tried complementary or alternative medicine, or maybe you're thinking about it. **Either way, keep these three steps in mind:**

Know what it is. Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is defined as practices that aren't integral parts of conventional medicine. Complementary medicine generally refers to treatments that work *with* conventional methods, such as therapeutic massage paired with prescription pain relief. Alternative medicine comprises those practices used *instead of* conventional medicine, such as consulting an osteopath (DO) rather than a doctor of medicine (MD).

Do some homework. There are many options, including:

- Alternative medical systems, such as oriental medicine or ayurveda, a traditional system of Indian medicine that focuses on the body, mind and spirit
- Mind-body interventions, including yoga and biofeedback
- Biologically-based treatments such as herbal medicine
- Manipulative and body-based therapies, including chiropractic, massage and osteopathy, which focus on the musculoskeletal system
- Energy therapies, such as acupuncture and Reiki, a Japanese technique that transfers healing energy from one person to another

Find more information about safety and effectiveness at the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, nccam.nih.gov.

Keep your health care provider in the loop. Some complementary and alternative medicine treatments are unproven or can even be unsafe — as in herbal supplements, which are not subject to FDA scrutiny, or ayurvedic medicines that may contain toxic levels of some substances. Before using a nonconventional treatment, talk with your health care provider to find out if it's right for you.

The bottom line: Always weigh the risks and benefits of any treatment, but don't do it alone. Alternative medicine can help when it is used correctly.



Stroke IQ Answers

- 1 True.** Greater awareness of heart attack symptoms has helped lower the number of premature deaths from heart attack. Experts sometimes refer to stroke as a "brain attack" in the hope that people will regard it with the same urgency as a heart attack.
- 2 False.** Nearly a third of strokes occur in people under age 65.
- 3 True.** Symptoms may include weakness, numbness or paralysis on one side of the face, arm or leg; sudden blurred or decreased vision; difficulty speaking or understanding simple statements; dizziness; sudden severe, unexplainable headache.
Quick test: See whether the person can answer a simple question, such as "Can you hear me?"
- 4 True.** It's also the third leading cause of death.
- 5 False.** Emergency medical help may include a clot-busting drug that works if given during the first three hours of an attack. Quick action is most important.
- 6 False.** The National Stroke Association says 80 percent of strokes are preventable. **Some factors that can help lower your risk:** Keep your blood pressure under control (nearly one-third of people with high blood pressure don't know they have it), keep your cholesterol in check, know whether you have an irregular heartbeat known as atrial fibrillation and quit smoking.

THE BEST EXERCISE FOR WEIGHT LOSS

Is it walking?
Running?
Aerobics? Any of the above. The best exercise for weight loss is one you enjoy doing. To lose weight, burn more calories than you take in on a regular basis. The more you like a physical activity, the more likely you'll stick with it — for life.



Salads ... (continued)

Choose one special "garnish." Salads are about enjoyment, not deprivation. So treat yourself to one highly nutritious splurge, such as a small amount of sunflower seeds, Chinese noodles, croutons, raisins or olives.

With a little planning, salads can be a healthy part of your summer fare — bursting with flavor and low-calorie nutrition. Enjoy!

"Gratitude is the heart's memory."
— French proverb



NEXT MONTH: How to Slow Down