



Wellness Connection



Spring into Shape—Even with Asthma

Spring is a great time to head outdoors for exercise, even if you have asthma. In fact, some of America’s best-known athletes—including Olympic gold medalists Jackie Joyner-Kersey and Greg Louganis—have asthma. Their condition hasn’t slowed them down, and it shouldn’t slow you down, either.

KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS

While springtime allergies and air pollution can worsen asthma symptoms, they don’t have to keep you indoors. Try these tips:

- Talk with your doctor before beginning a new exercise routine. He or she can tell you how to deal with an attack and may prescribe quick-relief medicine.
- Keep tabs on air quality. Check the radio, newspaper,

or local newscast for pollution and allergen levels. You also can check the Air Quality Index on the Environmental Protection Agency’s website at www.epa.gov/airnow. If levels are high, exercise inside, reduce your activity time, or decrease your intensity.

- Avoid exercising near busy roads or during rush hour.
- If you’re allergic to pollen, don’t exercise outdoors between 5 and 10 a.m. Exercise in the late afternoon or after a heavy rain, when pollen levels are typically lower.

CHOOSE ASTHMA-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES

In addition to avoiding triggers, you can select activities that are less likely to cause asthma attacks. Swimming is a good option. Walking, golf, leisurely biking, and hiking also are safer bets.

Vigorous activities are more likely to cause an attack. Sports such as soccer, basketball, and long-distance running are not the best options.

If you have asthma, regular physical activity is one of the best things you can do for your well-being. So go on, get out there and enjoy the great outdoors! ■

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Looking for an easy way to start exercising? Join WalkingWorks! This FREE program offers tools and tips to help you get the most from your walks. Visit www.bluehealthadvantage.com. Click on “Tools & Programs,” then choose “WalkingWorks.”

Fruits and Vegetables: Fresh, Frozen, or Canned?

For taste and appeal, fresh produce is hard to beat. Fruits and veggies from the garden or local farmer's market usually provide the most nutrients, too. But when produce comes from far away, important vitamins and minerals are lost during shipping and storage.

It is not always easy to get to the farmer's market or to garden all year. What are your other options?

- **Frozen** fruits and veggies are packaged soon after they are harvested. They retain most of their nutrients, especially if they have not been thawed and refrozen.
- **Canned** produce keeps many of its nutrients, too. The canning process destroys some. But canned tomatoes, corn, carrots, and spinach beat out fresh on certain nutrients, including vitamins

A, K, and E.

- **Juices** that say "100 percent fruit juice" on the label offer lots of vitamins and minerals. But they do not have fiber. That's why it is better to focus on whole fruits, not juices.
- **Dried** fruit is high in fiber, but it is more dense in calories than fresh fruit. Serving sizes should be cut in half when using dried fruit. ■

Eat a rainbow of fruits and vegetables every day, no matter what form. Find out how many servings you need at www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov.

RECIPE

Pasta Primavera

Need to fit more veggies into your diet? This flavorful dish provides three servings of vegetables, and it takes only 30 minutes to prepare.

Veggies and pasta:

- 1 cup broccoli florets
- 1 cup sliced carrots
- 1 cup sliced zucchini
- 1 cup macaroni or rotini pasta

Sauce:

- 1 tbsp. flour
- 1 tbsp. margarine
- 1 cup skim milk
- ¼ tsp. dried basil
- ⅛ tsp. black pepper
- 2 tbsp. Parmesan cheese

1. Steam vegetables until crisp-tender, and cook macaroni according to package directions.
2. In a small saucepan, melt margarine and blend in flour. Gradually stir in milk and seasoning.
3. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until sauce thickens. Remove from heat and blend in cheese.
4. Pour over hot vegetables. Add macaroni and mix together.

Serves two; serving size is half of recipe.
Each serving provides: Calories 360; Total fat 8 g;
Fiber 5 g; Sodium 200 mg; Protein 15 g



Tricks to Beat Ticks— And Prevent Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is on the rise in America. The culprit? Ticks. Here's how to beat these sesame seed-sized bugs:

- Keep your yard trimmed and free of leaves and brush. Ticks love overgrown areas.
- If you live near a wooded area, create a buffer between your lawn and nearby trees with wood chips or gravel, which helps contain ticks.
- Wear long sleeves and pants when you're in woody areas.
- Use an insect repellent with 20 to 30 percent DEET, especially during May through July, when ticks are at their most active.
- Talk with your vet about how to protect your pets.

Check your skin for ticks after you've been outdoors. To remove an attached tick, use tweezers to firmly

grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull the tick out and away from your body in one steady motion. Throw the detached tick in the garbage, and clean your skin with soap and warm water.

See your doctor if you develop a fever, headache, fatigue, or a red, ring-like rash after a tick bite. These could be early signs of infection. Lyme disease can affect the joints and nervous system if it is not treated with antibiotics. ■

Ticks shouldn't keep you from enjoying the great outdoors. This spring, explore all that Nebraska state parks have to offer. Find a hiking trail near you at www.ngpc.state.ne.us.

A Primer on Insurance Terms

Here is the next installment of our series on health care lingo. You have probably seen the following words. We want to make sure you understand what they mean.

Claim: A claim is an itemized statement of health care services and their costs provided by a hospital, physician's office, or other provider facility.

Medicare supplement: This is a private, medical expense insurance plan that supplements Medicare coverage. It is also known as a Medigap policy.

Outpatient care: This refers to treatment that is provided to a patient who is able to return home after care without an overnight stay in a hospital or other inpatient facility.

how to reach us

For questions about billing, benefits, or claims, contact:

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HEALTH BRIEFS

Three Slim-Down Secrets

New findings offer weight-loss insight:

- **Think light.** Certain foods have a lower energy density, meaning they have a lot of water, not calories. Salad greens and fresh fruit are two examples. These foods let you serve up a satisfying portion and feel fuller.
- **Don't starve.** Studies show that women who eat too little won't lose more weight. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, calorie levels should never drop below 1,200 a day for women.
- **Pump iron.** People with more muscle burn more calories each day. Do strengthening activities, such as push-ups, two to three times a week.

More Kids Have High Cholesterol

High cholesterol is a growing problem in kids. Experts now say that some children may need cholesterol testing.

Talk with a pediatrician about your child's cholesterol if:

- Your child is overweight.
- You or your child's other parent has high cholesterol or heart disease.
- A grandparent had heart disease before age 55.
- Your child has diabetes or high blood pressure.
- You don't know your child's family history.



The Good and Bad of Sunbathing

The sun's rays can cause skin cancer, cataracts, and wrinkles. But sunshine also creates vitamin D in our bodies. Vitamin D is critical for strong bones and disease prevention. So is it OK to catch some rays, or not?

Yes—in moderation. About 10 to 15 minutes of sunlight two to three times a week is often enough. To be sure you get enough vitamin D, eat foods rich in this nutrient.