



# Wellness Connection

## Skin Deep: A Closer Look at Preventing Skin Cancer

**W**ith 1 million new patients every year in the United States, skin cancer is the most common form of cancer. Because sun exposure is one of the risk factors for skin cancer that we can control, protection against the sun is vital to prevention and can be lifesaving.

A recent study by the American Academy of Dermatology revealed that people who spend a significant amount of time driving have an increased risk for skin cancer, particularly on the left side of the body. This newfound and perhaps unexpected risk factor is a reminder of how important it is to know the facts about skin cancer and how to steer clear of it.

Being adamant about sun protection, whether for an outing at the beach or just a drive in the car, is key in preventing skin cancer:

- Wearing sunscreen and reapplying every couple of hours is essential in protecting the skin. Use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 and apply generously about 20 to 30 minutes before going outside.
- Remember that UV rays are present all year round and in many weather conditions—even when it is hazy, cloudy, or snowing—and sunscreen should be used every day. Look for a product that provides protection from both UVA and UVB rays. UVB rays are the most dangerous type and are most responsible for sunburn



and skin cancer, although UVA rays also are damaging to the skin and can actually penetrate car windshields.

- To create a full-body sun shield, wear lip balm that contains sunscreen; a hat; sunglasses; and clothing to block UV rays in vulnerable places such as eyes, ears, and the back of the neck. Arm yourself with sunglasses with UV protection. Use a wide-brimmed hat and white or light clothing to reflect the sun's rays.
- The best way to bypass penetrating rays is to avoid the sun when it's at its strongest. The sun's rays are at their most dangerous in the middle of the day, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. ■

Having regular checkups and doing skin self-exams can help detect skin cancer. If you notice any skin abnormalities or are concerned about your risk for skin cancer, talk with your doctor. He or she may ask you questions about your personal risk factors and administer a series of tests or refer you to a specialist to determine a diagnosis.

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## Tips for Trimming Your Caffeine Intake

Caffeine offers a pleasant pickup. But consume too much, and you may end up with sleep problems, anxiety, and irritability.

To lower caffeine intake, go slowly. A too-abrupt withdrawal can trigger headaches, fatigue, and nausea.

**1. Switch to decaf.** Decaffeinated coffee only has about 3 milligrams of caffeine per 8-ounce cup, compared with about 100 milligrams in an 8-ounce cup of regular coffee.

**2. Brew tea instead of coffee.** Two cups of tea have as much caffeine as one cup of coffee.

**3. Steer clear of energy drinks.** Many energy drinks contain more than 70 milligrams of caffeine per 8-ounce serving. A 12-ounce soft drink should not contain more than 65 milligrams, according to rules set by the FDA. However, there are no rules for caffeine in energy drinks.

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## Start Your Summer Journey Here!

If you've ever wanted to explore Nebraska, but just weren't quite sure where to start, *The Great Park Pursuit* is tailor-made just for you and your family. Leave the video games at home, and take the kids outdoors! *The Great Park Pursuit* is designed to beckon families to explore Nebraska's beautiful parks, and perhaps win great prizes too!

"Too often, recreation time is spent in front of a screen," says Lee Handke, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska. "We are happy to sponsor *The Great Park Pursuit* because it encourages families to get out and spend meaningful time together in Nebraska's beautiful state parks. Families will be rewarded with more active lifestyles, plus create memories that will last a lifetime."

Start by signing up at [www.negpp.org](http://www.negpp.org). There you'll find a wealth of information about the program, as well as guidelines on which parks to visit. Somewhere in each park, there is a special post with a pencil rubbing. Your mission? Find the



post, do the rubbing, and then enjoy the park for the rest of the day. Those who turn in the pencil rubbings for all 10 designated Nebraska parks will be eligible for outdoor packages from Bass Pro Shops totaling \$1,000! Even if you can't make it to all 10 parks by September 10, you can still win. Just one pencil rubbing will make your family eligible for prizes.

In addition to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, major sponsors of *The Great Park Pursuit* include the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the Nebraska Recreation and Parks Association, and Bass Pro Shops. ■

# Score Better Health with a Round of Golf

Golfers are keen on their game, and no wonder—the sport demands skill, focus, and a competitive spirit. And there are more reasons to keep swinging: Golf gets you outside and tees you up for a great workout.

## GOLFING IS ON PAR WITH HEALTH ADVICE

Regular rounds of golf may help decrease the risk for obesity and prevent diabetes, cancer, stroke, and other diseases. That's because golf is a form of moderate exercise. Experts say healthy adults should get at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise five days a week.

Plus, you can boost your workout to get even more health benefits. Make the most of your golf workout by walking instead of taking a cart. You'll burn more than 300 calories an hour. In a typical 18-hole round, you may cover four to five miles and take nearly 12,000 steps. That's more than the 10,000 steps a day experts suggest to stay fit.

## TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR GAME

Before hitting the fairway, get a bucket of balls and head to the driving range. This helps you warm up—and it may even improve your score.

When you're not on the links, squeeze a tennis ball for five minutes at a time. This helps build strong forearms for a safe swing.

Also, consider taking a lesson or two from a golf expert to learn proper form and help prevent injury.

Before you start swinging, warm up for 10 minutes with gentle stretching. ■



## Garden Salad Pizza

Calories: 322, Fat: 8.8 g, Sodium: 654 mg

- 2 tbsp. cornmeal
- 1 tsp. olive oil
- 1 large red onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 10-oz. tube pizza dough
- 2 large tomatoes, thinly sliced
- 1 c. low-fat mozzarella cheese, shredded
- ¼ c. nonfat plain yogurt
- 2 tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- ½ tsp. balsamic vinegar
- ½ tsp. Dijon mustard
- ¼ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 c. torn romaine lettuce
- ¼ c. fresh basil, coarsely chopped

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Coat a baking sheet with nonstick spray. Sprinkle with cornmeal.
3. Warm oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add onions and cook for 12 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool for 5 minutes.
4. Roll pizza dough into a 12-inch circle. Transfer to baking sheet. Sprinkle onions over dough, arrange tomatoes on top, and sprinkle with mozzarella.
5. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes or until bottom crust is browned and cheese is melted.
6. In a medium bowl, combine yogurt, Parmesan, garlic, vinegar, mustard, and Worcestershire sauce. Mix well. Add lettuce and basil; toss to coat. Spread salad over hot pizza. Serves four.

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## HEALTH BRIEFS

### Lifestyle Changes Can Reduce a Child's Risk for Type 2 Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes, which used to be known as adult-onset diabetes, now affects kids who have poor eating habits and get little exercise. To help protect your children:

- Ban habits that lead to overeating. Make little ones use a plate and eat at the table.
- Get your kids moving. They need an hour of physical activity on all or most days of the week.
- Control portions. Don't let kids overeat. Switch to smaller plates to encourage smaller portions.
- Delay seconds at mealtime. Wait 15 to 20 minutes before you offer seconds.
- Don't buy junk food. Offer low-calorie snacks such as carrots, celery, low-fat cheese, or fresh fruit.
- Cut back television time. Turn off the set after two hours a day—or less.

### Understand—and Improve—Your HDL Cholesterol

High-density lipoprotein (HDL) is known as the "good" cholesterol because it helps take cholesterol out of the body so that your arteries

stay clearer. New research says that HDL may play a role in boosting heart health, regardless of LDL ("bad" cholesterol) levels.

HDL numbers should be at least 40 mg/dL for men and 50 mg/dL for women.

To raise your HDL levels:

- If you're overweight, shed those excess pounds.
- Exercise for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- Quit smoking, if you smoke.

### MRSA: Fighting the Superbug

MRSA is a type of *Staphylococcus aureus*, or "staph," bacteria. While staph infections usually can be treated, MRSA is troublesome because it can be resistant to some antibiotics.

Most alarming is a certain strain which has become more common outside of health care settings—in locker rooms, health clubs, and school gyms. This strain is called community-associated MRSA, or CA-MRSA.

Spread through skin-to-skin contact or the shared use of personal items, CA-MRSA can cause severe infections, and even death, in otherwise healthy people. To avoid it:

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Keep cuts clean and covered.
- Avoid sharing personal items, such as towels and razors.