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HealthyLife® Letter

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Promoting Health. Enhancing Life. Reducing Costs.



FACTS ABOUT SMOKING

Let's review the numbers:
More than 440,000 Americans die each year from cigarette smoking and secondhand smoke, while 8.6 million are sickened by smoking, CDC officials said. Tobacco use is the single leading preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States. In 1966, over 42% of adults smoked. Today about 20% of adults smoke (about 22% of teens smoke). That's still too many.

Ancient secrets to successful exercise

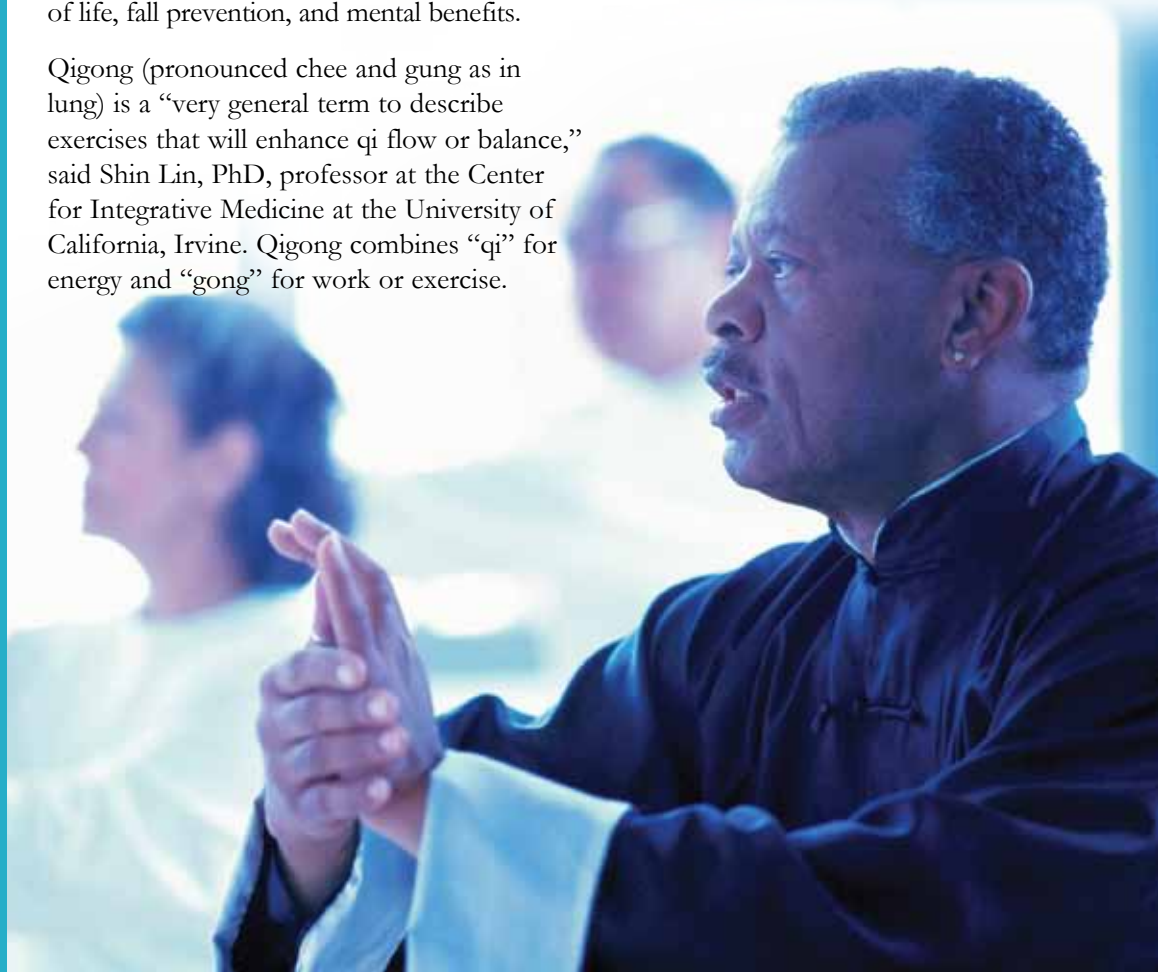
Tai Chi and Qigong aren't so secret anymore. An across-the-board review of the health effects of these gentle movement practices tells of many physical and mental health benefits for the heart, immune system, and overall quality of life.

The review, in the American Journal of Health Promotion, included 77 studies on Qigong or Tai Chi published in peer-reviewed journals. The authors say that the review provides a "stronger evidence base" for bone health, heart and lung fitness, physical health, balance, quality of life, fall prevention, and mental benefits.

Qigong (pronounced chee and gung as in lung) is a "very general term to describe exercises that will enhance qi flow or balance," said Shin Lin, PhD, professor at the Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of California, Irvine. Qigong combines "qi" for energy and "gong" for work or exercise.

Tai Chi is much more specific, focusing on a series of 24 to 108 movements that have a long written history over 19 generations, said Dr. Lin, a member of the National Advisory Council for Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

"Tai Chi and Qigong have many health benefits and therefore should be considered a high priority when one is selecting an exercise to practice," Dr. Lin said.



SELF-CARE CORNER

10 ways to get the most out of midlife

Are your best years ahead? A national survey of women between the ages of 35 and 49, sponsored in partnership with the National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health and Teva Women's Health shows that more than three-quarters of women in midlife say the best years are ahead, not behind. Yet midlife is notoriously known as a time of crisis. Women's health expert, Dr. Judith Reichman, tells how women are seizing the midlife moment and making new choices related to their health.



IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY JOINED THE RANKS OF WOMEN ENJOYING MIDLIFE, HERE ARE 10 WAYS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THESE YEARS:

1. Don't obsess about those 8 glasses of water each day. Drink when you are thirsty and when you are exercising briskly.



Too much water reduces the impact of electrolytes and strains the bladder.

2. Focus on family bonding. Often midlife crises for women are not an age phenomenon but rather due to the very significant changes that occur in the lives of our growing-up children and our maturing (we hope) partners.
3. Spend more time with your partner. Don't wait until the nest is already empty. This is the time to rediscover why you fell in love in the first place.
4. Rev up the love life. You are free to go on dates with your partner—real dates!

5. Periodically reevaluate your choice of birth control. The second-highest rates of unplanned pregnancies occur in midlife.
6. Worry more about you. PMS gets worse with age, and work and family responsibilities continue to rise, so it is important to establish de-stressing routines, including setting aside time to exercise and visit with friends.

7. Cut down on salt, reduce your caloric intake by 100–200 calories per day and boost your calcium and vitamin D intake. By midlife, most women are at high risk for high blood pressure and heart disease. Cutting salt can save your life and set up your family for healthy habits as they get older.



8. Embrace your desire to sleep. Now is the time to develop good sleep habits to prepare you for the next stage of life as hormonal changes during menopause increase sleep troubles.
9. Do something you thought you would never have time for. Take up a new hobby or go back to an activity you love—knitting, dancing, learning, or volunteering. Do something that makes you feel good about yourself.
10. See your doctor. You have always made sure everyone else in the family gets a yearly check-up, but what about you? Schedule those yearly health screenings and don't neglect your own health.



*Judith Reichman, MD, is an attending physician in gynecology at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and author of *Slow Your Clock Down: The Complete Guide to a Healthy, Younger You*.*



{**Note:** Many topics like the one on this page are contained in a medical self-care guide, such as Healthier at Home®, Health at Home®, and HealthyLife® Self-Care Guide, and/or addressed by a nurse advice line. They serve as excellent resources. If you have a self-care guide and/or access to a nurse advice line, use it whenever you are unsure about what to do for symptoms and health issues you are experiencing. They can help you make better decisions about when to seek professional assistance and when you can treat yourself at home using self-care.}



Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning: YOU CAN'T SEE IT OR SMELL IT

Every year, more than 400 people die in the U.S. from accidental carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. CO is found in fumes produced by furnaces, portable generators, stoves, lanterns, and gas ranges, or by burning charcoal and wood. CO from these sources can build up in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces. People and animals in these spaces can be poisoned and can die from breathing CO.

The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. People who are sleeping or who have been drinking alcohol can die from CO poisoning before ever having symptoms.

- Never use a gas range or oven to heat a home.
- Never leave the motor running in a vehicle parked in an enclosed or partially enclosed space, such as a garage.
- Never run a motor vehicle, generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine outside an open window, door, or vent where exhaust can vent into an enclosed area, or inside a basement, garage, or other enclosed structure, even if the doors or windows are open, unless the equipment is professionally installed and vented.
- Keep vents and flues free of debris, especially if winds are high. Flying debris can block ventilation lines.
- Never use a charcoal grill, hibachi, lantern, or portable camping stove inside a home, tent, or camper.
- If conditions are too hot or too cold, seek shelter with friends or at a community shelter.
- Install a CO alarm in your home and change the batteries often (just as you do with a smoke detector).

IF YOU SMELL GAS . . .

Escaping or uncontrolled natural gas may start on fire when it comes in contact with a spark or flame. If you smell gas, leave immediately. Don't touch anything that could spark. Call your gas company or 911 from a safe distance. Do not re-enter the area until you have been advised that it is safe, warns MidAmerican Energy.



Don't get cold feet

Chilly weather can be hard on feet. The American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons offers 5 tips to healthy feet.

1. If the shoe fits, wear it—Narrow shoes, overly-high heels or shoes that aren't worn very often, such as dress shoes, can irritate feet and lead to blisters, calluses, swelling, and even severe ankle injuries. Choose a shoe that has a low heel and fits your foot in length, width, and depth while you are standing.
2. Don't overindulge— Did you know your feet can feel the effects if you eat too much of certain foods and beverages high in purines. Shellfish, red meat, red wine, and beer can trigger extremely painful gout attacks, a condition when uric acid builds up and crystallizes in and around your joints. Uric acid is sensitive to temperature changes (so gout can start in the big toe, which is the coldest part of the body).
3. Be pedicure-safety conscious—Nail salons can be a breeding ground for bacteria. To reduce your risk of infection, choose a salon that follows proper sanitation practices and is licensed by the state. Consider also purchasing your own pedicure instruments to bring to your appointment.
4. Watch for ice and snow—Use caution when traveling outdoors. Watch for ice or snow patches along your trail. The ankle joint can be more prone to serious injury from falling on ice. If you fall, use R.I.C.E. therapy (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation) to help reduce the pain and control swelling around the injury until you see a doctor.
5. "Listen" to your feet—Inspect your feet regularly for any sign of ingrown toenails, bruising, swelling, blisters, dry skin, or calluses, especially if you have diabetes.

HEALTHY EATING



Don't eat this or even that

What's the worst food in America? David Zinczenko and Matt Goulding, the authors of the Eat This, Not That! book series, revealed the whopper: Cheesecake Factory's Bistro Shrimp Pasta, which boasts a monstrous 2,727 calories and 78 g saturated fat. That's the equivalent of 78 strips of bacon and as many calories as nearly 6 McDonald's Quarter Pounders with Cheese. The worst "healthy sandwich" was the Blimpie Special Vegetarian (12-inch, 1,180 calories).



Get off the SoFAA

More than a third of calories most Americans eat come from stuff you don't want: solid fats, added sugars, and alcohol. The government experts monitoring the Dietary Guidelines for Americans call them SoFAAs. Unhealthy solid fats (SoF) sneak into the diet as saturated fats and trans fats. Added sugars (A) are found in breakfast cereal, sauces, snacks, and desserts, not just in sugar-sweetened beverages. Alcohol (A) is beer, wine, and spirits. So get off the SoFAAs and get off your sofa. Read food labels.



When it comes to dairy, go low

Low-fat dairy products, such as skim milk and non-fat yogurt, are much higher in calcium than whole-milk products. That's because low- and non-fat products often are fortified with dry milk solids. Check labels to see what you're eating, and boost your calcium intake, recommends David Hamerman, MD, Director of the Center for Bone Health at Montefiore Medical Center.



Brownies? Chocolate bar? Fudge-nut ice cream?

Chocolate, like many things, is personal and often the type of chocolate a person chooses to indulge in is influenced by their mood and personal situations. According to a new survey by Lindt Chocolate, 3 out of 5 Americans choose a chocolate based on conditions such as their mood, the occasion, the time of day, and even the weather.

So what are you in the mood for? More than half of Americans surveyed eat creamy milk chocolate when they need an escape, followed by any type of chocolate with nuts, intense dark chocolate, and smooth white chocolate.

Featured Recipe:

Cowboy Beef and Black Bean Chili

This easy-to-make dish simmers for over an hour, melding the seasonings into an incredibly flavorful chili.

Ingredients

2 pounds ground beef
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1-1/2 cups chopped onion
2 tablespoons minced garlic
2 medium yellow bell peppers, chopped
1 large jalapeno pepper, seeded, finely chopped
1/4 cup chili powder
1 tablespoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon each dried oregano and thyme
1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper
1 can (28 ounces) crushed tomatoes, undrained
1 can (14-1/2 ounces chili-seasoned diced tomatoes, undrained
1 can (14 ounces) ready-to-serve beef broth
12 ounces dark beer
1/3 cup tomato paste
1 tablespoon honey
2 cans (15 ounces each) black beans, rinsed, drained
Chopped fresh cilantro



Directions

Brown ground beef in stockpot over medium heat 8 to 10 minutes or until beef is no longer pink, breaking up into 3/4-inch crumbles. Remove from stockpot with slotted spoon. Set aside. Pour off drippings.

Heat oil in same stockpot over medium heat until hot. Add onions and garlic; cook and stir 3 to 5 minutes or until onions are tender. Add bell peppers and jalapeño; cook and stir 4 to 5 minutes or until peppers are tender.

Return beef crumbles to stockpot. Add chili powder, cumin, oregano, thyme and red pepper; cook and stir for 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in crushed tomatoes, diced tomatoes, broth, beer, tomato paste, and honey; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer 45 minutes. Uncover stockpot; continue simmering 30 minutes or until thickened to desired consistency, stirring occasionally.

Stir in beans; cook 5 to 10 minutes or until beans are heated through. Season with salt and black pepper, as desired. Garnish with cilantro, if desired.

Makes 8 servings: 364 calories, 10 g fat, 1131 mg sodium, 39 g carbohydrate, 10.6 g fiber.

Used with permission from the Cattlemen's Beef Board and Federation of State Beef Councils.

Kids and contacts



A lot of kids won't wear their glasses. And they do get in the way in sports. But are contact lenses a good idea? Yes, says a study of kids ages 8 to 11. Wearing contacts improved their quality of life.

Although eyeglasses may seem easier to manage, daily disposable contact lenses posed fewer problems in terms of broken or lost eyewear. In fact, children in the study who wore contact lenses chose daily disposables most of the time, over two-week disposables.

In an American Optometric Association study, more than half of the eye doctors surveyed said it was fine to introduce a child to soft contact lenses between ages 10 and 12.

The quality-of-life study was supported by funding from Johnson & Johnson Vision Care and The Vision Care Institute and reported in the journal *Optometry and Vision Science*.

A curve you don't want

Curvature of the spine (or scoliosis) may sound like a scary diagnosis, but proper treatment enables children with the condition to lead normal, active lives.

Small curves are a normal part of the spine and not cause for concern, according to Dr. Daniel Green, a pediatric orthopedic surgeon at Hospital for Special Surgery in Manhattan. But when the curve exceeds a certain range, children require medical help.

Scoliosis tends to run in families, but most often the cause is not known. However, studies show that scoliosis is not caused by poor posture, the use of backpacks, or any type of exercise. It affects girls 10 times more often than boys.

Scoliosis is often first detected during a routine visit to the child's doctor or during a school screening. The development of scoliosis is usually gradual and painless. A curve can develop without a parent or child knowing it, until it becomes more obvious.

Signs of scoliosis

- One shoulder appears higher than the other.
- The waist appears uneven.
- One hip looks higher than the other.
- The ribs appear to stick out on one side.
- The child seems to be leaning to one side when standing.

Early diagnosis and treatment lead to a better outcome. The diagnosis is based on a physical exam and x-rays. A curve of greater than 10 degrees on an x-ray is considered to be scoliosis.



For patients with smaller curves, the doctor may recommend just watching the condition. For bigger curves, the best treatment may be a brace to correct the condition. Sometimes surgery may be needed.

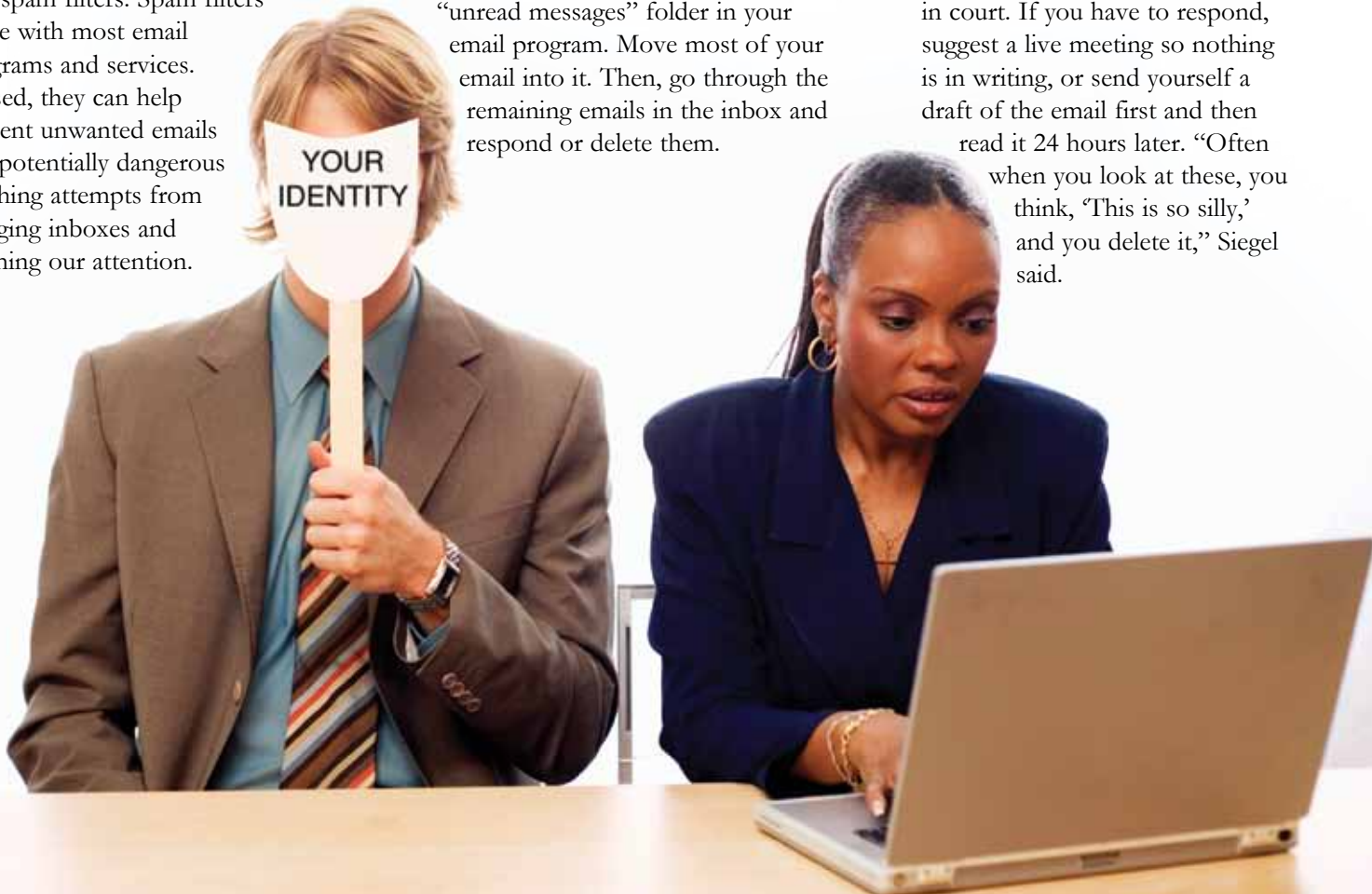
SUCCESS OVER STRESS

Go on an email diet

Each day, 55 billion email messages are written. How many of those do you receive? Email can be extremely useful for work and socializing but managing the never-ending electronic stream can cause anxiety and even legal problems and financial risk. “It has taken over our professional lives in many ways,” said Marty Siegel, associate dean of the Indiana University School of Informatics and author of *The E-Mail Diet Book*. “That’s really the danger, that we’re spending so much time just reacting to the next email message rather than focusing on what’s most important to do to move our work goals forward.”

Siegel offers these tips to help you shed unwanted emails and take control of your emailing habits:

- Don’t respond to everything right away. Allocate certain times during the day to look at email and stick with the plan. “Some people think it’s only polite to respond to email immediately, or they need to instantly respond to appear on top of things,” Siegel said. “This is where the addiction begins.”
- Use spam filters. Spam filters come with most email programs and services. If used, they can help prevent unwanted emails and potentially dangerous phishing attempts from clogging inboxes and claiming our attention.
- Have at least two email accounts. He recommends having one email account for work and another for personal use. This will help reduce spam on the work account if this account is never disclosed during online shopping or in other instances when email addresses are requested.
- Read it or move it. “There’s something incredibly powerful about getting down to the point where you have no messages in your inbox,” Siegel said. He suggests creating an “unread messages” folder in your email program. Move most of your email into it. Then, go through the remaining emails in the inbox and respond or delete them.
- No “thanks.” Don’t send needless email responses. Like just saying “thanks” for an email. It just adds to other people’s email problems.
- Never send email when angry. “That’s the worst thing you can do,” Siegel said. Email sent in anger can be misread, sound sarcastic or rude and might be intentionally mean. This can create bigger problems by providing something in writing that can be recorded and end up in court. If you have to respond, suggest a live meeting so nothing is in writing, or send yourself a draft of the email first and then read it 24 hours later. “Often when you look at these, you think, ‘This is so silly,’ and you delete it,” Siegel said.





EXERCISE THAT COLD AWAY

Until there's a cure for the common cold, regular physical activity may help keep the cold bug at bay. Adults and kids may catch 2 to 10 colds every year.

A study in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* found that active people get fewer colds and less severe symptoms. Study participants who exercised 5 days a week had nearly half the number of colds as those who were sedentary.

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It's just a cold (but when to see a doctor)

See a doctor if you aren't getting any better or if your symptoms worsen, say medical experts from the FDA. With children, be alert for high fevers and for abnormal behavior such as unusual drowsiness, refusal to eat, crying a lot, holding the ears or stomach, and wheezing.

Signs of trouble for all people can include:

- A cough that disrupts sleep
- A fever that won't go down
- Increased shortness of breath
- Face pain caused by a sinus infection
- Worsening of symptoms, high fever, chest pain, or a difference in the mucus you're producing, all after feeling better for a short time



Cold and flu complications may include bacterial infections (such as bronchitis, sinusitis, ear infections, and pneumonia) that could require antibiotics.

Remember: While antibiotics are used against bacterial infections, they don't help against viral infections such as the cold or flu.