

For Your Diary:

2 Oct: Walk to Work Day

26 Oct: Pink Ribbon Day

Visit our website for more information

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Welcome

Welcome to the spring 2009 Newsletter!

With spring we enjoy the arrival of warmer weather. This is just what we need to kick-start, or refresh, our health plan to ensure we feel great leading into summer.

With Australia rivaling the USA in terms of obesity and heart disease it is vital that each of us consider our health goals for the remainder of 2009. More importantly, that we put those goals into action.

In response to these challenges Health Futures have launched a range of

innovative and exciting services. The launch took place at the International Health and Productivity Management Congress with overwhelming success.

Also in this issue we discuss heartburn, hygiene and healthy lunch options. Visit our online resources for more information.

Thank you for subscribing, and have a wonderful season!

Sincerely,

Carrie Rathbone and the Health Futures Team.

Whole Grains: Greater than the Sum of their Parts.

It's well documented that whole grain foods are healthier than refined foods. With every year that passes, we find more and more reasons why.

It has been clear for some time that the regular consumption of whole grains reduces the risk of coronary heart disease and cancer, but there is now growing evidence that whole grains can also reduce the risk of having a stroke or developing diabetes.

In addition, studies are now pointing to the usefulness of whole grains to avoid weight gain and to slow the ageing process. There are many more good reasons to add whole grain cereals to our diet.

Amongst them:

- Whole Grains are pre-biotic. They stimulate the growth or activity of healthy bacteria.
- Whole Grains reduce the risk of gum disease.
- People who consume whole grains are, from a statistical point of view, less likely to develop intestinal cancers.
- Women who consume appreciable amounts of whole grain food consistently weigh less than those who do not.
- Whole Grains are high in fibre, cleansing the intestine and removing potentially toxic substances more rapidly from the system when consumed.

We don't need too much more convincing when it comes to this super food. Be sure to add some to your weekly grocery list. Whole grains can be found in most breakfast cereals, breads and porridge.

Metabolic Syndrome: On the Increase in Australia



Metabolic syndrome defines a cluster of conditions that occur together, increasing your risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

It is diagnosed when a person has at least three of these heart disease risk factors:

- **Excess body fat in the abdominal area.** This is a greater risk factor for heart disease than excess fat in other parts of the body, such as on the hips.

- **Elevated triglyceride levels.** Triglycerides are a type of fat found in the blood.

- **Lowered HDL cholesterol.** HDL is considered “good” cholesterol because it lowers your risk of heart disease.

- **Elevated blood pressure.**

- **Elevated fasting blood sugar (glucose).** Mildly high blood sugar can be an early warning sign of diabetes.

The more risk factors you have, the greater your risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, or a stroke.

Having just one of these conditions isn't diagnosed as metabolic syndrome, but it does contribute to your risk of serious disease. If more than one of these conditions occur in combination, your risk is even greater.

In general, a person with metabolic syndrome is twice as likely to develop heart disease and five times as likely to develop diabetes as someone without metabolic syndrome.

Diabetes is a major health concern in Australia.

An estimated 275 Australians develop diabetes every day. By 2031 it is estimated that 3.3 million Australians will have type 2 diabetes (Vos et al., 2004). If left unchecked, it promises to exceed the ability of public health services to manage the costs alone.

What can you do to prevent Metabolic Syndrome? Whether you have one, two or three of the risk factors discussed, the following lifestyle changes will reduce your risk of heart disease, diabetes and stroke:

Commit to a healthy diet. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. Choose lean cuts of white meat or fish over red meat. Avoid processed or deep-fried foods. Eliminate table salt and experiment with other herbs and spices.

Get moving. Get plenty of regular, moderately strenuous physical activity. Incidental activity is also beneficial; an example is to try walking to deliver phone messages at work instead of emailing them across.

Schedule regular checkups. Check your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels on a regular basis. Awareness is the first step to a healthy future.



“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

- MAHATMA GANDHI

5 Healthy Spring Working Lunches

Beyond the cost savings, most meals packed at home are healthier than foods at restaurants. When we eat out, we're often faced with large portions and fattening extras -- like the French fries that routinely come with sandwiches. When you pack lunch at home, you can control your portions and choose healthier ingredients. Try these options...

Bento Box: For this you need a sectioned lunch box. This is a great way to keep it interesting, and use up what is in your fridge. In each section put a variety of fresh veg, fruits, nuts, cold meats, bread fingers and Dips (beetroot, hommus, tzatziki etc).

Last night's dinner: Bake a potato the night before and cook some protein of your choice with low salt taco seasoning. Heat it up the next day and throw some onions on top. Invest in some good quality microwave-able containers.

Grain bread sandwich: If you love sandwiches, use a variety of whole-grain breads, pitas, and wraps. Choose lean fillings like sliced eggs, tuna fish, cheese or lean meats. Then jazz up your sandwiches with assorted greens, fresh basil, sprouts, sliced cucumbers, onions, and/or tomatoes.

Sushi: A great option if you still wish to buy lunch. It's quick, affordable and healthy with a variety of fillings to suit every palate. Avoid the deep fried chicken and prawn fillings.

Never forget Dessert: With so many great fruit options try your favourite with yoghurt and / or honey. Our favourite at the moment is sliced peaches and some yogurt with fresh blueberries.

Visit our online resources for more ideas.

Heartburn: When should you follow up?

Heartburn is that awful burning sensation in your chest or throat, usually when acid rises up from your stomach. It is a symptom of gastro esophageal reflux (GERD). It can occur when acid or other contents from your stomach "back up" into the esophagus (the tube food passes through going from your mouth to your stomach).

Eating a heavy meal, heavy lifting, exercise or lying flat (especially after eating a big meal) can cause heartburn.

If you recognise the above-mentioned symptoms, and are concerned that it may be more serious, ask yourself these three questions the next time the discomfort occurs:

1. Are you sweaty?
2. Do you have palpitations?
3. Are you short of breath?

If any of those symptoms occur with the heartburn you should see your GP and ensure it is not heart-related.

If you have uncomplicated heartburn from acid reflux, your doctor may prescribe over-the-counter medicines. These include common antacids such as Maalox, Mylanta, Rennie or Tums.

Lifestyle modification, such as cutting down on foods that trigger your heartburn, can help. So can avoiding heavy meals, not eating a big meal within two hours of bedtime, and not lying down soon after a meal.

Stress reduction may help reduce heartburn incidents. If you smoke, you should quit, as it can be a heartburn trigger.

"If you can walk, you can dance. If you can talk, you can sing."
- A ZIMBABWE SAYING

Hygiene: Defeating Infection

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We're on the Web!

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"You must first have a lot of patience to learn to have patience." -
STAINSLAW J. LEC

A long list of communicable illnesses, from winter coughs and 24-hour stomach bugs to deadly diseases, flourish in conditions of inadequate personal hygiene affecting families, friends and work colleagues. Good personal hygiene is one of the most effective ways to protect ourselves, and others, from illness. Some proven ways to protect yourself and your family:

General Hygiene

1. Regularly disinfect common touch points around the home - door handles, telephone receivers, computer keyboards, kitchen worktops etc.
2. Wash your hands at key germ transmission points through the day - just before mealtimes and just after using the restroom for example.

Hygiene in the Kitchen

3. Disinfect dishcloths - and have a separate one for 'clean' and 'dirty' jobs. Ensure sure they are cleaned and replaced frequently.
4. Stack the fridge hygienically. As a rule of thumb, ready to eat foods should be stacked towards the top and raw foods towards the bottom.
5. If possible, separate chopping boards should be used - one for fruit and vegetables, one for 'high risk' foods like raw meat and fish and one for other items. All should be disinfected after each use.
6. Regularly sweep up crumbs in cupboards to prevent insect infestations.

Young Children

7. Ensure toys are sterilised regularly - toys can go from floor to mouth and child-to-child.
8. Ensure the floors are regularly cleaned with a good quality disinfectant. This is very important if young children are still crawling.
9. Sterilising babies' bottles is very important - babies and toddlers are very susceptible to diseases.

Bathroom

10. Make sure the toilet seat is down when flushing the toilet - men included. This will prevent germ-laden water droplets splashing around the bathroom.
11. Regularly disinfect communal touch points like flush handles, and taps.
12. Change hand towels regularly to ensure they don't become germ havens.
13. Leave a good quality hand liquid wash by the taps for people to use.
14. Leave face flannels out to dry - if they are left damp pile, bacteria can multiply quickly in the moist warmth of the towel.

Pets

15. Clean pet food bowls and litter trays at an outside tap if possible. Avoid cleaning them in the kitchen sink.
16. Try to keep pets out of the kitchen and away from food preparation areas. Regularly clean out places where pets sleep, like dog baskets.

Notice Board:

If you are interested in past newsletter issues please visit

<http://www.healthfutures.com.au/newsletter.php>

Have a great month!