# In Good Health

*Health Futures Pty Ltd/ 1300 720 323*
**Newsletter Issue A29**

## Welcome

If I could have one Christmas wish, it would be this: with the click of my fingers, everyone would suddenly realise how much of a difference can be achieved by doing small things long term (and not the other way around). Eating more fruit daily, putting more vegetables on the plate, switching to wholemeal bread, cutting fat off meat, going for a walk each day, self checking for cancers, using sun block, doing a daily set of back care exercises...

Too many of us, when we decide to make healthy changes, do so with a bang -- "I'll gym every day", "I'll give up red meat", "I'll never use margarine", "I'll stop drinking", sound familiar?

Most of the healthy people you know are probably that way because they do lots of little things -- often. They don't make a big issue of it -- it is simply what they do.

It's that time of year again, when New Years resolutions are declared. Why not resolve to do the time, and pick a few smaller, realistic health goals (see article below)? This time next year you'll be amazed at the difference.

Enjoy! Wishing you all of the very best over the Festive Season, see you in 2011!

Sincerely,

*Carrie Rathbone and the Health Futures Team.*

## Summer Fun, Stay Safe in the Sun

It's one thing we don't like to advertise, but Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. 1 in 2 of us will have some form of skin cancer removed in our lifetime, which is not something we can ignore.

In addition to this, heat rash, sunburn, eye damage, dehydration, fainting, heat exhaustion and heat stroke are all possible injuries one can sustain from over exposure to the sun.

Wherever you are this summer, be sure to have with you the necessary sun protection, and take all necessary precautions. Caps, hats, lotions, sunglasses, gloves and long sleeve shirts are all great ways to prevent sun damage when there is prolonged exposure.

Those of you with children should be more alert, as children are at a greater risk of sun damage. Broad-spectrum, water resistant sunscreen with a high sun protection factor (SPF 30) should always be applied to children when playing outdoors. Children under 12 months of age should not be exposed to direct sunlight.

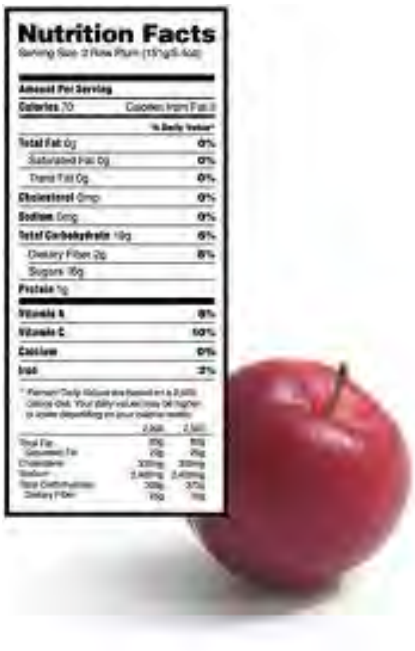
In addition, remember to perform regular skin self-checking, and refer to your specialist for a thorough examination if you have not already done so this year. Early detection results in the best possible outcomes.

**Information:**

**We'd like to hear from you!**

***Please see the notice board on page 4 of this newsletter for details.***

***Contents:***




# Understanding Nutritional Labels

*- by Cheryl Cuthbertson*

In order to determine how healthy a food item is when including it in your eating plan, you must learn how to navigate your way around the nutritional information (food) label. Reading food labels enables you to compare similar foods and choose those which are healthier and better value. Below, we explore the items listed on a food label.

**Nutritional Information Panel (NIP).** Almost all manufactured foods have a Nutritional Information Panel (NIP). This provides information on seven nutrients: kilojoules (energy), protein, total fat, saturated fat, total carbohydrates, sugars and sodium. The NIP will only provide information about other nutrients if the manufacturer makes a claim. For example, the cholesterol content does not have to be listed unless the manufacturer claims the item has no cholesterol or is low in cholesterol.

**Quantity per serve.** Consider this first when you look at the NIP. The 'quantity per serve' is standardised to 100g or 100ml. This will enable you to make comparisons between similar foods because serving sizes can vary depending on the manufacturer. It is also useful if you want to calculate how many servings there are in the packet and how many kilojoules you will consume if you consume the whole packet.

**Kilojoules (kJ).** Kilojoules indicate how much energy you get from consuming the food item. This is particularly useful if you are monitoring your kilojoule intake. Remember that the number of servings you consume will determine the number of kilojoules you actually eat. Eating too many kilojoules (energy) per day is linked to obesity.

The amount of energy you need per day depends on your age, gender, height, weight and activity level.

***As a general guide, a female who is moderately active can consume 9,800 kJ/day or 7,600 kJ/day if she is less active.***
***A male who is moderately active can consume 10,700 kJ/day or 8,300 kJ/day if he is less active. (This is a general guide, please consult a dietician for personalised advice/guidance).***

**Fat.** The NIP will show the amount of fat per serving. This is important if you are trying to lose weight or manage your blood lipid profile. Pay particular attention to the amount of saturated fat and trans fat per serve as too much can raise your blood cholesterol level and increase your risk of heart disease.
***As a general guide, your total fat intake should be 20-30% of your total energy intake.***

**Carbohydrates.** This includes sugar and starches in food and is useful if you are trying to limit your carbohydrate intake.
***As a general guide, your total carbohydrate intake should be 45-60% of your total energy intake.***

**Sugar.** This tells you how much of the total carbohydrate is sugar. It includes natural and added sugars. The sugar content alone will not predict the effect of food on your blood glucose level.
***It is recommended to limit sugar intake to 15% of your daily energy intake***

**Sodium.** The NIP will show you how much sodium there is per serve. The sodium content is important if you have high blood pressure, because a low-sodium diet is essential to reducing high blood pressure or maintaining a healthy blood pressure.
***A low sodium food product would contain less than 120 mg per 100g serve.***

**Fibre.** The NIP will only contain information about fibre if the manufacturer makes a claim, such as, 'good source of fibre'.
***It is recommended that you aim for 25g -38g of fibre per day.***

*"The first wealth is health."*
*- R W EMERSON*

# Relax and De-stress this Holiday Season

Christmas can bring with it an association of memories, events and rituals, some pleasant and others painful. The lead up to the big day itself may be a time of joy but it can also be a time of great stress.

Whether someone feels that the festive season is something to look forward to or not, it helps to develop a basic awareness of the potential for stress during this time and develop tools to help get through it. Armed with shopping lists and plans, consider also the techniques for staying calm, positive and happy. There is a way to enjoy the inevitable challenges the "silly season" brings.

**Plan ahead.** Time pressures occur more so during the holidays with its whirl of parties, seasonal activities, and the entertaining of others. During this hectic time, it is easy to become over-committed. Before the rush begins, invest in a good calendar or organiser, and mark off activities to complete, with the dates you plan to do them.

**Set boundaries.** People tend to drop their boundaries around the Christmas holidays, feeling obliged to attend office parties and family gatherings. This can lead to more stress and discomfort. It's healthier for people to check in with themselves, before agreeing to other's requests, and determine what is best for them. Saying no to people and situations that aren't fulfilling or nourishing frees up energy to say yes to things that are.

**Take care of your body.** A person can only cram so many activities into their calendar, and over commitment can lead to lack of sleep or "down time". This makes self care even more important, which includes getting enough sleep and eating nutritiously.

Diet-wise - rich holiday foods can result lethargy and lead to weight gain. Allow yourself only a taste of fat and energy-laden foods at holiday parties, and try to create healthier versions of holiday favourites. Alcohol is a known depressant so limiting this has large health benefits. Limiting caffeine can also help your overall health and mood.

**Don't forget exercise.** This deserves a category of its own, since it has so many health and emotional benefits. Exercise is a known stress reliever, depression alleviator, and can help combat the holiday "battle of the bulge". Do something you enjoy; you'll be more likely to continue with it into the New Year.

**Do something fun.** Take a day off during this time to do something that you and your family really enjoy. Or grab some "down time": put up your feet in a hot bath, light a scented candle, and listen to your favourite music.

**Breathe deeply.** When the day is full, and the evening looks even more hectic, take a minute to breathe slowly from your abdomen. These are called "cleansing breaths" and deliver oxygen to your body. They also relieve tension. Do this exercise for one minute a couple of times a day, with closed eyes. Think of something pleasant. You will be amazed at how refreshed you feel afterwards.

**Healthy Stress Solutions.** Meditation, aromatherapy, and activities that promote relaxation all provide holiday stress relief. These natural stress management techniques go a long way toward easing holiday tension.

**Professionals.** If stress relief products aren't working and anxiety / stress gets out of hand, remember to seek out the help of professionals. Psychologists are specially trained to teach stress relief techniques and their help can be invaluable during holiday months.

*"The happiest people don't necessarily have the best of everything. They just make the best of everything."*

*- AUTHOR UNKNOWN*

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# Thinking Ahead: Top Tips to Start 2011

Seeing as you're already in planning mode, why not add these ideas to ensure 2011 gets off to a great start, and stays great?

**Log your workouts.** Our online fitness calendar is the perfect tool to help you stick to your fitness regime. Planning and recording makes you accountable for your actions. The best way to plan your sessions is to treat exercise exactly like any other appointment. Sit down at the end of each month and schedule in your exercise sessions for the following month. Login at www.healthfutures.com.au.

**Make exercise fun with music.** A great time to request an iPod as a gift! Listening to music while working out distracts your mind from the physical exertion your body is experiencing, and can motivate you to make the most of your session.

**Get active with friends.** Why not choose an active catch-up? Most of the time we think that catching up with family and friends needs to be around food and drink, but this doesn't have to be the case. Instead of sipping coffee as you catch-up with your girlfriends, organise to meet them in a local park or walking track and walk while you talk.

**Never sleep over a backache:** It is never advisable to sleep over a backache. Research shows that people who take to their beds with backache take the longest time to recover. Those who avoid bed-rest and continue normal activities as much as possible have less pain.

**Don't skip breakfast!** When managing your health it's important not to skip breakfast. Studies show that people who regularly eat a sensible breakfast are more likely to be in a healthy weight range than those who skip breakfast.

**Drink More.** Water flushes out toxins. A good amount of liquid intake helps the entire system and of course is best for curing skin ailments. The average man needs 2.9 litres, or about 12 cups of water, a day and woman needs about 2.2 litres.

**Eat wholegrain foods:** Make sure you include whole-grain bread, rice or pasta at least four times a week and you may reduce your risk of cancer significantly.

**Snack smart.** Snacking can be a great way to maintain blood sugar levels and crush hunger pangs between meals, thereby reducing the likelihood of overeating at mealtime. Try this personal favourite:

Chocolate fruit sticks: Cut up your favourite pieces of fruit and thread them through a skewer. Drizzle melted milk chocolate over the top. Enjoy!

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***If you don't have access to our online Health Planner (and have taken part in the Good Health – Great Future Program), please contact us and we will activate it for you.***

## Notice Board: We'd like to hear from you

Over the years, Health Futures have had the pleasure of working with you through our health programs. Throughout 2011 we would like to share your inspirational story to provide the motivation others may need to achieve their health goals.

If you've got a personal success story to offer to our growing collection, please email them to us. Your story could be related to overcoming barriers to change, a health discovery, a serious condition prevented or simply a change in mindset that lead to a better health future.

We would also like to hear from you where Health Futures has contributed to your success.

***Please reply to this email with your feedback and personal story.***
*All correspondence will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and nothing posted without your express permission.*