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HealthyLife[®] Letter

Promoting Health. Enhancing Life. Reducing Costs.

February 2009



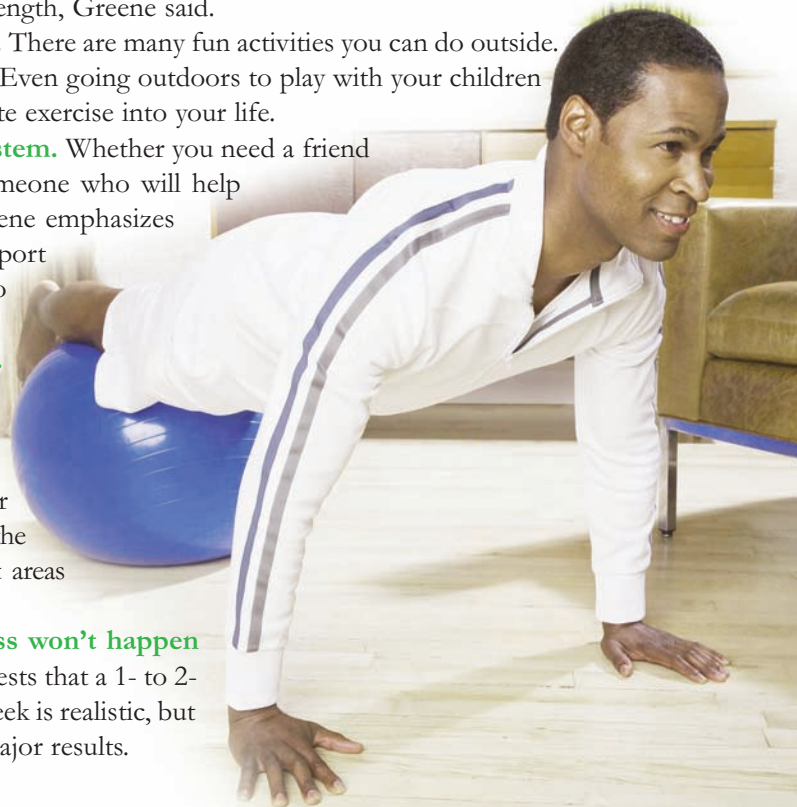
CLEANER APPLES

Boost the scrubbing power of water with baking soda, suggest the makers of Arm & Hammer Baking Soda. Clean dirt and residue off fresh fruits and vegetables. Just sprinkle a little baking soda on wet produce, then gently scrub and rinse.

From couch to crouch: You can exercise well at home

By purchasing the right equipment, adding creativity to your workouts, and keeping your motivation up, you can start an exercise program around the house that will last. Colleen Greene, wellness coordinator with MFit, the University of Michigan Health System's health promotion division, offers the following tips:

- * **Get a fitness assessment.** An evaluation will show if you need flexibility work or if you should focus on increasing your cardiovascular capacity. This will provide a starting point for fitness planning. Also, be sure to check with your doctor to ensure that your new routine will be the best and safest one for your needs.
- * **Purchase equipment that is right for you.** Don't get something that is just going to end up as a coat hanger, Greene said. "You want to look at what is exciting to you, what you will do and what to focus on once your assessment has been done."
- * **Be creative.** Do you have a can of soup? Then you've got yourself a dumbbell. An empty milk carton filled with sand? A heavier weight. Using the resources around you not only mixes up your routine, but it saves you some money too. You can even use your own body weight to do various resistance exercises (such as push-ups) that help to increase your strength, Greene said.
- * **Embrace the outdoors.** There are many fun activities you can do outside. Walking is ever popular. Even going outdoors to play with your children are great ways to integrate exercise into your life.
- * **Maintain a support system.** Whether you need a friend to work out with or someone who will help you stay motivated, Greene emphasizes the value of getting support to help you commit to your new routine.
- * **Change up your routine.** Not only can adding a mix to your workouts prevent injuries, it can also add some "spice" to your routine. It also gives you the chance to target different areas of your body.
- * **Realize that weight loss won't happen overnight.** Greene suggests that a 1- to 2-pound weight loss per week is realistic, but it will take time to see major results.

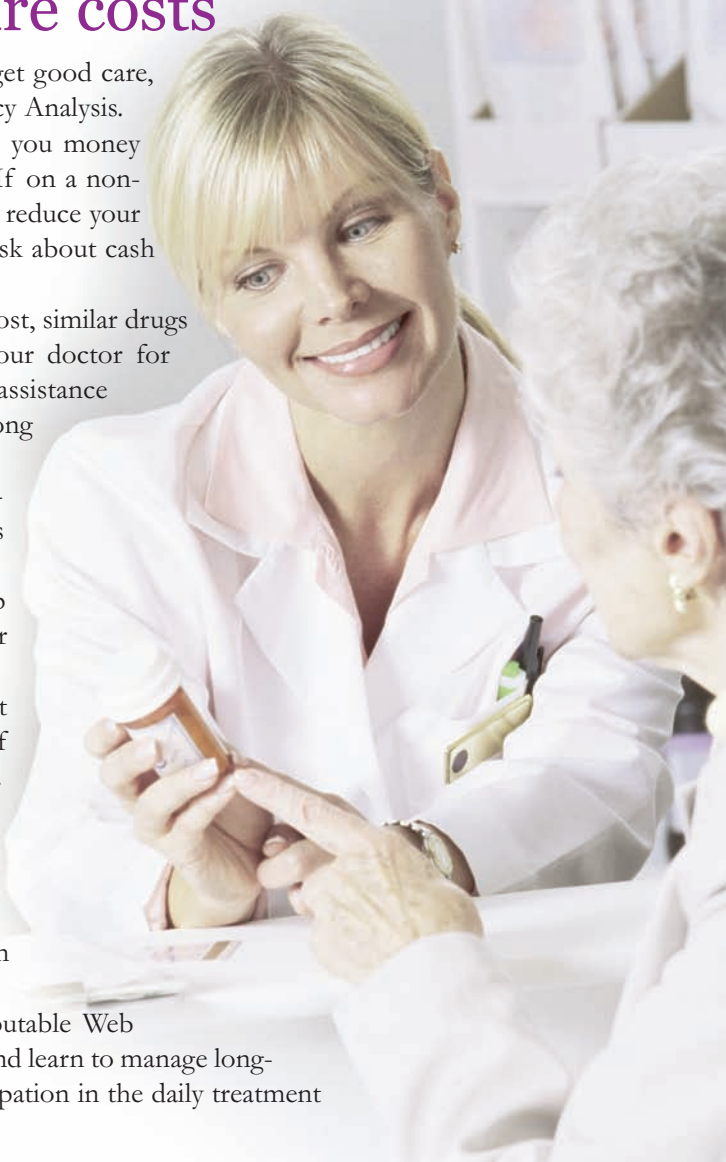


SELF-CARE CORNER

8 ways to trim your health care costs

With sense and a dose of consumerism, you can save money and still get good care, says Devon Herrick, PhD, an economist at the National Center for Policy Analysis.

- 1. Insurance options:** A Health Savings Account (HSA) might save you money over a PPO or HMO, especially if your employer contributes too. If on a non-group plan, shop around and consider increasing your deductible to reduce your premium and still maintain major medical coverage. If uninsured, ask about cash rates and discounts before you receive care.
- 2. Shop for better prescription deals:** Ask your doctor about lower-cost, similar drugs (generics) that do the same thing. For brand name drugs, ask your doctor for samples and check for discount coupons, rebates, and cost assistance programs from the drug company's Web site. Compare prices among local and reputable online pharmacies.
- 3. Consider OTC options:** Ask your pharmacist if there is an over-the-counter drug that can help manage a temporary or chronic illness – and that costs less than one that is prescribed.
- 4. Cut office-visit costs:** Find out if retail clinics (in grocery stores or strip malls), telemedicine services, and walk-in clinics charge less than doctor office visits. Use the emergency room only for medical emergencies.
- 5. Shop for diagnostic procedures and lab work:** Paying upfront and/or filing insurance forms yourself may save costs. For any kind of procedure, make sure—in advance—that all providers are in-network.
- 6. Take advantage of health fairs:** Many health fairs (at work or in your community) offer wellness health screenings, lab work, and diagnostic tests at much lower rates. Some services are free.
- 7. Medical tourism:** If your deductible is high or you're uninsured, consider traveling to another country where the cost of surgery can be a fraction of the cost of the same procedure in the U.S.
- 8. Do your homework and become an active patient:** Search reputable Web sites and read medical self-care guides to help you find information and learn to manage long-term conditions, such as asthma, allergies, or diabetes. Active participation in the daily treatment of your illness can help keep costs and complications low.

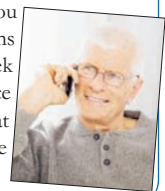


Removing earwax

Earwax isn't wax at all. It's a mixture of secretions, hair, and dead skin that builds up in the outer part of the ear canal. It's natural. And ear, nose, and throat doctors say it doesn't need to be removed unless it causes problems. Called cerumen, this substance actually protects your ears. "Unfortunately, many people feel the need to manually 'remove' cerumen from the ears," says Peter Roland, MD, a specialist who headed up a panel that set new guidelines about removing earwax. The guidelines recommend doctors use wax-dissolving agents, wash the ears out with water, or manually remove it with a suction device or other specialty instrument under supervised care to avoid damaging the ear or causing impaction. The guidelines warn against using cotton-tipped swabs. Ear candling, an alternative to traditional methods of ear wax removal, doesn't work, is potentially dangerous, and is condemned by the FDA, Dr. Roland says.



{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.}



Glaucoma: Knowing your risks can save your sight

It's a leading cause of preventable blindness because glaucoma often goes undetected. About half of the 3 million Americans who have the disease are unaware of it.

Glaucoma can quietly damage the eye and optic nerve even before you notice vision problems. Such damage cannot be reversed once it occurs. The key is seeing an eye doctor (ophthalmologist) at the right time and following a treatment plan.

Adults with no signs or risk factors for eye disease should get a baseline screening at age 40—the time when early signs of disease and changes in vision may start.

Source: The EyeSmart campaign of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, and Eye Care America, a public service program of the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology



As simple as 10 times 3

Want to lower your risk for type 2 diabetes and heart disease? All it takes is 10 minutes of physical activity 3 times a day. Ten times 3—it's really that simple. And it's what the CDC recommends to help you lower your blood pressure, manage your cholesterol, and lose weight.

In the US today, 1 in 5 people have diabetes, and heart disease is the leading cause of death. But exercising for 30 minutes each day can make a big difference in cutting your risk for these deadly diseases. And you don't have to hit the gym to reap the benefits of staying active. You can take three 10-minute walks after meals or find other simple ways to fit activity into your busy life.

“Physical activity is particularly important for people at risk for diabetes and heart disease,” says Dr. Peter Sheehan, Mount Sinai School of Medicine. “Staying active can help lower risk in and of itself, and it can help patients lose weight, which also lowers risk. It's a double benefit.”

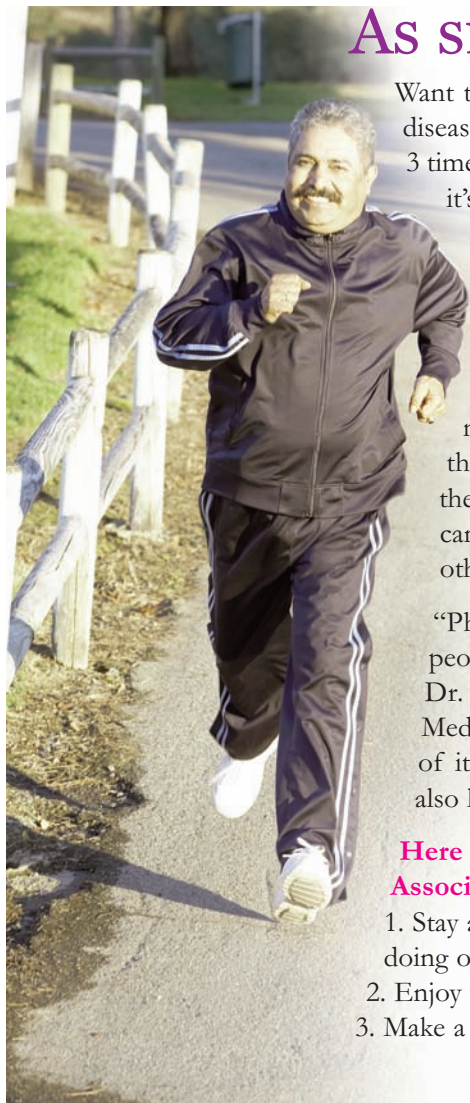
Here are 3 tips from the American Diabetes Association to keep in mind:

1. Stay active all day. It's easy to exercise while you're doing other things.
2. Enjoy yourself.
3. Make a game of it.

Beware bogus treatments

All consumers seeking information about any health product or medical treatment should be familiar with the following signs of health fraud, warns the FDA:

- * Statements that the product is a quick and effective cure-all or a diagnostic tool for a wide variety of ailments
- * Suggestions that a product can treat or cure serious or incurable diseases
- * Claims such as “miraculous cure,” “scientific breakthrough,” “secret ingredient,” and “ancient remedy”
- * Claims that the product is safe because it is “natural”
- * Undocumented case histories or personal testimonials by consumers or doctors claiming amazing results
- * Claims of limited availability and advance payment required. Promises of no-risk, money-back guarantees
- * Promises of an “easy” fix for problems like excess weight, hair loss, or impotency



HEALTHY EATING

Top 10 super foods

WHICH FOODS HAVE SUPER NUTRITIONAL POWERS?

Registered dietitian Elaine Magee, MPH, explains the super power of foods in her book *Food Synergy*. Get more of these foods individually and in combination:

Nutty for Nuts: Nuts contain mostly monounsaturated fat (the good kind), and antioxidant phytochemicals (plant-based good nutrients). Most also provide plant-based sterols, which in sufficient amounts may help lower cholesterol, enhance your immune system, and decrease the risk of some cancers.

Olive Oil: There are 30-plus precious phytochemicals in olive oil. Many have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory action in the body, helping to promote heart health and protect against cancer. They're also found in the olives themselves, of course.

Fishing for Omega-3s: Try to eat a serving of fish 2 to 3 times a week. Fish offers powerful omega-3s and is also a rare natural food source of vitamin D.

Touting the Tomato:

Tomatoes are loaded with food synergy potential because they contain all 4 major carotenoids (a powerful grouping of phytochemicals), 3 high-powered antioxidants (beta-carotene, vitamin E, vitamin C), and also super amounts of lycopene (thought to have the highest antioxidant activity of all the carotenoids).

The Citrus Family of Fruits: The whole citrus family is loaded with synergy because it boasts awesome amounts of the phytochemical subgroup flavones—boosting heart health. Citrus also contains vitamin C, which is involved in several happy partnerships with other nutrients.

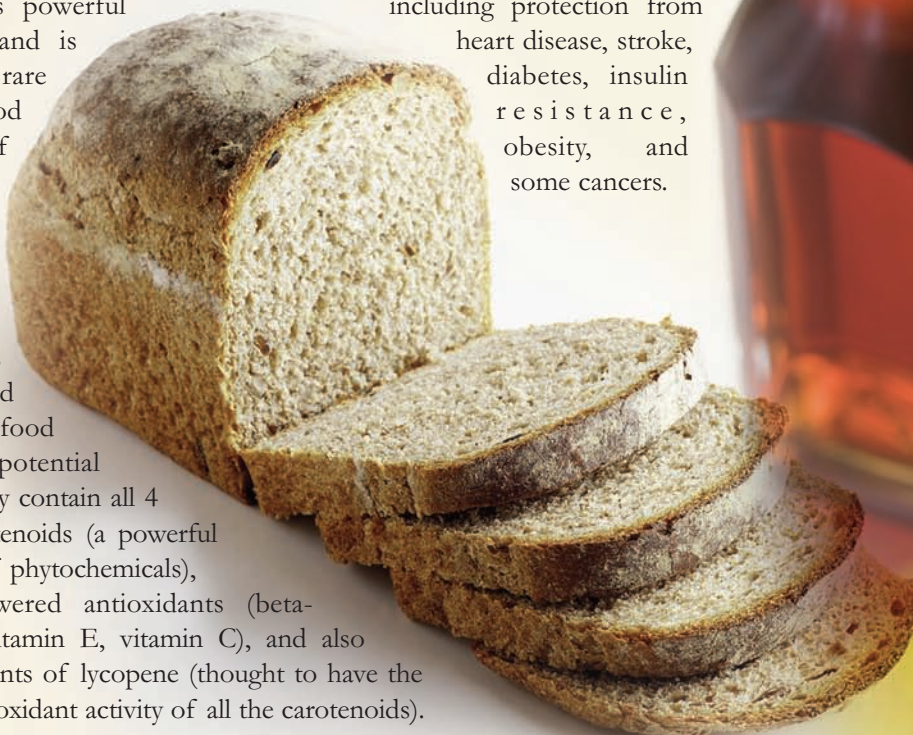
Tea for Two (and make it green most of the time): With each sip, you get 2 potent flavonoids as well as a healthy dose of an antioxidant—all of which benefit the body many ways, such as stopping cancer. Green and black teas also contain antioxidant polyphenols, thought to block cell damage that can lead to cancer.

Just Say Yes to Whole Grains: Strive to eat at least 3 servings per day of whole-grain foods. Whole grains are naturally low in fat and are cholesterol-free, contain 10% to 15% protein, and offer loads of fiber and other good stuff including vitamins. Whole grains provides so many health benefits, including protection from heart disease, stroke, diabetes, insulin resistance, obesity, and some cancers.

Dark Green Veggies: Eat as many vegetables (dark green) as you can, as often as you can. The more the merrier!

- * Eggplant and okra are high in fiber.
- * Cruciferous veggies like kale and broccoli have anticancer compounds.
- * Veggies like carrots, sweet potatoes, and spinach have a rich mix of phytochemicals.

Low-fat Dairy: Two of the nutrients in many dairy foods—calcium and vitamin D—may also work together to reduce the risk of colon cancer and ease the symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). A couple of low-fat dairy servings a day are also part of a smart diet to lower high blood pressure.



THE BOTTOM LINE ON FOOD SYNERGY IS THIS: THE MORE YOU INCORPORATE POWERHOUSE FOODS AND BEVERAGES INTO YOUR DAY, THE LESS ROOM YOU'LL HAVE FOR THE MORE PROCESSED AND NUTRIENT-POOR FOODS AND BEVERAGES.

Eat protein for breakfast; feel full the rest of the day

A new study in the British Journal of Nutrition concluded that when people ate high-quality protein foods, from sources such as eggs and lean Canadian bacon, for breakfast, they felt fuller throughout the day compared to when more protein was eaten at lunch or dinner. “With a little planning, breakfast can easily be one of the most fulfilling meals of the day,” said Keith Ayoob, EdD, RD, associate professor of pediatrics at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He offers these suggestions from the Egg Nutrition Center for a high-quality protein-based breakfast:

* **Cook once, eat twice:** Use last night’s leftover vegetables as fillings for an easy-to-prepare omelet ready to eat in less than 2 minutes. In addition to the leftovers, fill the omelet with lean Canadian bacon and low-fat cheese for additional flavor and a protein punch.

* **Wake up right:** Start the day off with a balanced breakfast that pairs high-quality protein, like yogurt or low-fat dairy, with healthy carbohydrates, such as those found in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

* **On the go:** For a breakfast meal you can take with you in the morning, try a wrap. Add lean Canadian bacon and low-fat cheese and any other preferred toppings to scrambled eggs.

* **Family fun:** Make breakfast fun for the whole family by serving up creative dishes, like green eggs and ham. Simply add spinach to scrambled eggs and serve with ham.



Featured Recipe

Five-Spice Shrimp with Plum Sauce

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup Chinese plum sauce
- 1/4 cup water, or as needed
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1/2 red bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1/2 orange bell pepper, finely chopped
- 3 green onions, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 4 ribs bok choy, cut into 1/4-inch cubes; also finely shred green tops
- 8 ounces small (41 to 50 count) shrimp, peeled, deveined, and cut into 1/4-inch slices
- 1 teaspoon Chinese five-spice powder
- Dash of salt and ground white pepper
- 12 Belgian endive leaves
- Toasted pine nuts for garnish, optional (not included in nutritional analysis)

Directions:

Spoon the plum sauce into a small bowl. Stir in water, as needed, to reach a maple syrup consistency. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the bok choy and greens, bell peppers, and green onions; cook, stirring occasionally, for 4 minutes or until crisp-tender. Add the shrimp, garlic, and five-spice powder; cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute or until the shrimp turn pink. Season with salt and white pepper. Serve warm, at room temperature, or refrigerate to cool. To serve, spoon the vegetable-shrimp mixture into the endive leaves. Drizzle with plum sauce and sprinkle with pine nuts.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: calories 187, total fat 5 g, sodium 174 mg, carbs 24 g, fiber 6 g
Used with permission from *The Complete 15-Minute Gourmet: Creative Cuisine Made Fast and Fresh* by Paulette Mitchell.



SUCCESS OVER STRESS

Happiness can make you healthier

It's long been thought that happy people generally are in better health, but researchers aren't sure why. This study provides strong evidence that the happier you are, the healthier you will be.

Lead author Mohammad Siahpush, PhD, University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health, said the study may be the first to look at the effect of happiness on an individual's health. Findings are published in the American Journal of Health Promotion.

"Everything else being equal—regardless of your age, gender, whether you smoke, drink or exercise, if you're happy and satisfied with life now, you're more likely to be healthy in the future," said Dr. Siahpush who added that he was surprised to find such strong results.

The researchers asked nearly 10,000 Australians about their health in 2001. And 3 years later, they asked the same people if they were happy.

"We found strong evidence that both happiness and life satisfaction have an effect on our indicators of health," Dr. Siahpush said.



Make change stick

The exercise bike sits unused. Those promised pounds you were going to lose came back. You're smoking again.

Motivation expert Michael Vallis says most people fall into a pattern. They start out with the best intentions and do well for a little while ... but then fall back into old habits. It's a classic health trap: 2 steps forward, 3 steps back.

And that's a problem. People end up feeling bad about themselves. But people concerned about their health cannot only start a new behavior but continue it if they're honest and realistic about their motivation, says Dr. Vallis, a health psychologist and professor of psychiatry and psychology at Dalhousie University in Canada.

"People really need to identify personal and meaningful motivations," he says. "What's going to keep you going when it gets hard?"

First, ask yourself these questions:

- * Do you think your behavior is a problem?
- * How distressed are you about your behavior?
- * Are you interested in doing anything to change this behavior?
- * Are you ready to take action now?

Next, change the behavior by laying out "smart, specific goals." In other words, you can't just resolve to "get more active." You've got to identify when and for how long you'll do an exercise, whether it's yoga or swimming or cycling. "Get more active" turns into "I'm going to go for a brisk, hour-long walk on Thursday night at 6 p.m."

The third part of making change stick is to recognize the role emotion plays in your health. Come up with strategies to cope without resorting to destructive behavior, for example, eating when you're feeling down, or lighting up a cigarette when you're in a social situation.



Is your child ready for a cell phone?

YOUR 8-YEAR-OLD CHILD WANTS A CELL PHONE, BUT IS HE OR SHE REALLY READY FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY? UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM PEDIATRIC PSYCHOLOGIST, DAVID SCHWEBEL, PHD, SAYS THAT WHETHER A CHILD IS READY FOR A CELL PHONE DEPENDS ON THE CHILD AND THE FAMILY.



“Parents need to consider what their child is like and what the family’s needs are,” says Dr. Schwebel. “Some 7- and 8-year-olds are appropriate candidates for cell phones, whereas, some older children are not. Parents have to consider whether the child is able to care for the phone and whether they will use it appropriately to keep in touch with mom and dad, or if they will use it irresponsibly. Families also have to consider whether they can afford to give their child a cell phone.”

Cell phones can be tools for convenience, he says. “For instance young children can use them to call their parents to let them know where they are or to find out who will pick them up from school.”

But there are some safety considerations, says Dr. Schwebel, who directs the UAB Youth Safety Lab. Children and teens tend to become distracted when they are on a cell phone, making them more vulnerable to pedestrian injuries.

“Also cell phones could become a child’s way of socializing,” says Dr. Schwebel. “And while it may be fine for teens to text each other, socializing with peers may not be why you would want to give a cell phone to an elementary school child.”

But if parents decide that their young child is ready for a cell phone, parents can set rules for how and when the cell phone should be used or consider purchasing a cell phone with parental controls that lack text messaging and other features that the child may not be ready for, Dr. Schwebel says.

Crisis management at home

“The more couples spend and lose in the stock market, the more they fight,” says Mary Jo Rapini, a psychotherapist with The Methodist Hospital in Houston. “The bickering can put a huge strain on a marriage,” she says. “Stress and anxiety can erode trust between partners, especially if one misunderstands why the other is acting distant or distracted.” The key to getting through this crisis is to realize that the financial problems are not going to go away overnight and to communicate your fears. If you’re too angry to talk, write a note and talk later. Keeping feelings inside only harbors resentment in the long run and, in many cases, leads to cheating and/or divorce.

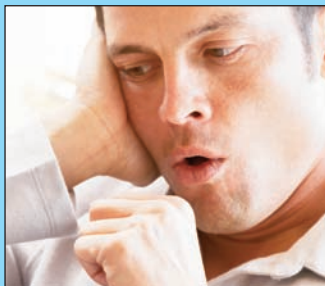
Rapini suggests some ways couples can get through a bumpy economy:

- * **Don’t panic.** If you take your money out now, there will be penalties. Consider the long-term view.
- * **Cut family expenses.** Sit down with your spouse and find 3 expenses you can cut back on. This will end up making your bond stronger.
- * **Eat at home/exercise together.** Eating at home costs less and is healthier. Take a bike ride or walk with your spouse and talk. This is a great way to promote togetherness.
- * **Set small realistic goals.** Take a few dollars from each of your paychecks and start putting away a little money now for a family vacation.
- * **Entertain at home.** Having friends over, as opposed to going out to a restaurant or club, is much cheaper and, most of the time, more fun.





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COUGH MEDICINE

More than a century ago, a restaurant owner in Poughkeepsie, New York, cooked up the first batch of cough drops, in two flavors still popular today—cherry and licorice. His name was James Smith. Today, we spend over \$154 billion on cold relief medicines each year, according to the US Census Bureau.

Medical Updates: Know the dangers of using antibacterial soaps

Before you buy antibacterial soap, you should know that it may do more harm than good, says Peggy Edwards, chair of the department of clinical laboratory science at Saint Louis University. It's a common misconception, according to Edwards, that antibacterial products can prevent illness. Overuse of antibacterial products might even make bacteria resistant to antibiotics.

Today, more than 45% of soaps contain antibacterial ingredients. And the options do not stop there. Cleaning products, laundry detergents, trash bags, and sponges are among the growing list of consumer antibacterial options. Edwards gives these reasons why consumers should avoid antibacterial products:

- * Antibacterial products will not keep you healthier. They do not prevent the spread of viruses that can cause colds and flu.
- * Antibacterial products could make bacteria resistant to antibiotic medication.
- * Antibacterial products go somewhere after we wash them down the drain. The effects of these chemicals on the environment are not known yet.
- * Antibacterial soaps give us a false sense of security. Bacteria are everywhere, and most bacteria are not harmful. Good hand washing is still the best way to remove germs.

