

Opening your eyes to healthy eating

There's no substitute for the quality of life good vision offers. Adding certain nutrients to your diet every day — either through foods or supplements — can help save your vision. Researchers have linked eye-friendly nutrients to reducing the risk of certain eye diseases, including macular degeneration and



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cataract formation.

FAST FACTS

■ In a recent survey conducted by the American Optometric Association, nearly three-fourths (72 percent) of respondents age 55 and older

began noticing changes in their vision between the ages of 40 and 45.

■ To cope with vision loss or various eye problems, less than one-third (29 percent) of respondents are increasing their nutrient intake for healthy eyes.

■ Many Americans (48 percent) still believe that carrots are the best food for eye health, when, in fact, spinach and other dark leafy greens are the healthiest foods for the eyes because they naturally contain large amounts of lutein and zeaxanthin.

■ In order to maintain healthy eyes, studies show that 10 mg of lutein should be consumed each day or one cup of cooked spinach four times a week.

■ More than 50 percent of Americans do not take in the recommended dosage of vitamin C per day.

■ One cup (8 fluid ounces) of orange juice per day contains 81.6 mg/8 fluid ounces of vitamin C, more than enough to help offset some eye diseases.

DIET AND NUTRITION

Adding antioxidants to your diet can improve your eye health.

■ Lutein and zeaxanthin are important nutrients found in green leafy vegetables, as well as other foods, such as eggs. Many studies have shown that lutein and zeaxanthin reduce the risk of chronic eye diseases, including age-related macular degeneration and cataracts.

■ Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) is an antioxidant found in fruits and vegetables. Scientific evidence suggests vitamin C lowers the risk of developing cataracts, and when taken in combination with other essential nutrients, can slow the progression of age-related macular degeneration and visual acuity loss.

■ Vitamin E in its most biologically active form is a powerful antioxidant found in nuts, fortified cereals and sweet potatoes. It is thought to protect cells of the eyes from damage caused by unstable molecules called free radicals which break down healthy tissue.

■ Essential Fatty Acids are a necessary part of the human diet. They maintain the integrity of the nervous system, fuel cells and boost the immune system. Two omega-3 fatty acids have been shown to be important for proper visual development and retinal function.

■ Zinc is an essential trace mineral or "helper molecule." It plays a vital role in bringing vitamin A from the liver to the retina in order to produce melanin, a protective pigment in the eyes.



Associated Press photo

CHARLES HUGHES and Amanda Dow recently hiked down from Mount Major in Alton, N.H. From hiking and biking to skiing and shoveling snow, staying physically active in rural northern New England might sound like a cinch. But researchers who have begun exploring how to promote healthy living in rural communities are digging beneath that scenic surface.

Research dispels myths about rural fitness

By **HOLLY RAMER**
Associated Press Writer

CONCORD, N.H. — From hiking and biking to skiing and shoveling snow, staying physically active in rural northern New England might sound like a cinch.

But researchers who have begun exploring how to promote healthy living in rural communities are digging beneath that scenic surface.

"From the outside looking in, you say, 'Oh, they don't need a park, they have the woods.'

"But the woods can be as much of a deterrent to being physically active as a freeway, depending on how you look at it," said Barbara McCahan, director of the Center for Active Living and Healthy Communities at Plymouth State University.

The New Hampshire school is one of a handful of universities looking at ways to encourage active living, health and wellness in rural places.

Researchers say the work is important because people living in rural communities are at greater risk for obesity, and past research focused on cities and suburbs has often produced conclusions that are a poor fit for more rural towns.

Adding sidewalks and bike paths so children can exercise on their way to school makes sense in cities and suburbs, but those aren't realistic options in a rural town where the school is on the outskirts, said David Hartley, director of the Maine Rural Health Research Center at the University of Southern Maine.

His research has included running focus groups in three Maine towns to identify opportunities for and obstacles to physical activity. For children in particular, transportation is a major barrier, he said.

"To get kids more physically active, one of the options seems to be getting more kids participating in after-school programs, but the busing situation is such that the bus goes home at 3 o'clock, and if you want to stay later you have to get a ride," he said.

"If you're from a low income family, you may not be able to get a ride. Chances

are, your parents are already working two jobs, and they just can't help you out."

Kyle Santheson is the town recreation director in Waldoboro, Maine, a coastal town of about 5,000 residents and one of the communities Hartley has studied.

He said there are a range of athletic programs for children and adults — from Little League to co-ed softball leagues — and many parents carpool.

But some children do end up left out.

More than one parent has told him, "Geez, I really can't have my kid participate because he doesn't have a ride."

Beyond organized athletic and recreation programs, Hartley also found that the notion that rural residents have unlimited access to outdoor recreation and open space simply by stepping outside their doors didn't ring true.

Hiking trails are largely informal and unmarked, overrun by snowmobiles in the winter and all-terrain vehicles in the summer.

Though there are well-maintained hiking trails around Waldoboro's high school, other trails are on private land held in trust and require a property owner's permission to use, Santheson said.

A quick phone call is usually all it takes, he said, "But most people, if they have to go through one extra step, they say, 'Oh, the heck with it.'"

That common attitude must be kept in mind when trying to promote physical activity, said Deborah John, who spearheaded Plymouth State's research and is now an assistant professor at Oregon State University.

"We need to do a better job of making the healthy choices the easy choices," she said. "And it needs to be informed by the people who live in the environment."

Some people may move to the country because they enjoy the kind of outdoor experiences a rural area provides.

But others — people who were born in a rural area or live there for other reasons — might not want to go on a solitary hike because they don't feel safe alone and would prefer more compan-

ionship and structure.

Bringing those two groups together can be challenging, John said.

For example, avid rock climbers might not want to make their favorite rocks more accessible by building parking lots or offering climbing lessons.

That's why it's important to get input from the people who live in rural areas rather than try to impose some outside notion of what should be done, she said.

To that end, researchers at Plymouth State worked with residents of three rural towns to create a Google-style "active living" map, with captions of certain features — a favorite bike route, for example — provided by residents.

"It's one thing to go into a community and do research, it's another thing to get the people who live there to help do the research," said McCahan.

"The people were actually generating the information. We weren't standing there watching people. ... What that did was stimulate their interest in the whole process."

In Maine, Bob Faunce drives 15 miles to another town to exercise at a YMCA, but he knows others in his rural town don't have that option if they don't have cars or aren't old enough to drive.

"There's no other place in the country I would rather live than in Maine, but the fact is, recreational opportunities are extremely limited," said Faunce. "And it's a terrible shame, specially for the kids."

But as the Lincoln County planner, Faunce has seen some progress in the few years since Hartley's focus groups.

The state is changing its requirements about school construction so new schools might not end up far so from a town center, and projects are in the works to make towns more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly.

"Of all the projects I've been involved with that require community input, these things get more input than any other projects," he said.

"There's a latent desire that people have. They just want to do some type of exercise where they live."

CLASSES

■ **AED Essentials** teaches about the use of automated external defibrillators through the American Red Cross. For information, call the Indiana chapter at (724) 465-5678.

■ **All About Baby** is a three-hour workshop that focuses on getting to know your baby, along with visits to the doctor, immunizations, bath time, fussiness, safety, child care and infant nutrition. For more information, call IRMC at (724) 357-8088.

■ **Beginning Yoga**, 7 p.m. Mondays at IRMC, (724) 357-8088.

■ **Childbirth/Infant Care** classes are offered through Excela Health. Classes include car seat safety: getting ready for baby, breastfeeding basics, infant massage, prepared childbirth and Lamaze. For more information, call (877) 771-1234.

■ **Cyber CPR** is a new way to learn adult CPR and first aid through the American Red Cross. Participants are issued a user name and password and a link to the training website. They are then able to take the knowledge portion of the course online at their own pace. The CPR and first aid skills are then tested in the classroom with an instructor. The online portion must be completed before attending the skills session. For more information or to register, call the Indiana chapter at (724) 465-5678 or e-mail bburns@iccarc.org.

■ **Discover Relaxation Within** is a four-week lifestyle improvement program identifying everyday stressors and specific techniques to evoke relaxation. The program also includes ways to reduce and manage stress. For more information, call IRMC at (724) 357-8088.

■ **Early Pregnancy** focuses on a healthy pregnancy, lifestyles and what to expect with physical and emotional changes, doctor visits and diagnostic testing. The free class is at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at IRMC. For information, call (724) 357-8088.

■ **Friends & Family CPR** is offered through Excela Health. For more information, call (877) 771-1234.

■ **Healthy Moves** is a supervised, structured exercise program for inactive adults or those at risk for health problems. Adults who wish to improve their fitness level can attend. For information, call IRMC at (724) 357-8088.

■ **I Can Cope** is a free educational program that offers practical information, resources and strategies on self-care for those facing cancer and their family members, friends and caregivers. The program is sponsored by the American Cancer Society and the Herbert L. Hanna Center for Oncology Care.

For more information, call (888) 227-5445, ext. 1077.

■ **Infant Massage** is a three-week class that gives parents an introduction to the benefits of massage for baby and an opportunity to try some of the techniques that can be used. The free class is offered through Excela Health Latrobe Hospital.

To register or for more information, call (877) 771-1234.

■ **Introduction to Disaster** classes teach how American Red Cross fits in when there is a disaster and how you can help your community.

For more information, call the Indiana chapter at (724) 465-5678.

■ **Logistics: Disaster Preparedness Training** is a study of providing support

services for a disaster relief operation, including transportation, facilities and supplies through American Red Cross. For more information, call the Indiana Chapter at (724) 465-5678.

■ **Look Good, Feel Better** provides beauty techniques for female cancer patients in the library of the M. Dorcas Clark Women's Imaging Center at IRMC. Reservations necessary. For information or to register, call (888) 227-5445 and use option #3 to register.

■ **Personal Nutrition Coaching** is a personalized program designed by a registered dietitian to address the needs of an individual seeking nutrition counseling relating to weight management, heart health or diabetes. For more information or an appointment, call Excela Health at (877) 771-1234.

■ **Sibling Class** is offered through Excela Health. For more information, call (877) 771-1234.

■ **Water Exercise Classes** are held at the Indiana County YMCA. Classes are arthritis, swimnastics and aqua aerobics. The seven-week sessions are excellent for individuals with joint problems and/or those who cannot exercise on land. Non-swimmers are welcome. For more information, call (724) 463-9622.

GRIEF SUPPORT

■ **Highmark Caring Place**, through the Caring Foundation for Children, Pittsburgh, offers support groups weekly or biweekly for grieving children, adolescents and families. For more information, call (888) 224-4673.

■ **John A. Lef Dahl Funeral Home** offers a bereavement support group open to the public.

For more information or to register, call (724) 463-4499.

■ **Pregnancy Loss Support Group** provides support for families who are grieving the loss of their baby through miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth or newborn death. For more information, call Excela Health at (877) 771-1234.

■ **Richard Shoemaker Funeral Home Support Group**, Blairsville, (724) 459-9115; information and support offered by phone.

■ **Robinson-Lytle Funeral Home** offers a bereavement library with books, videos and other information for adults and children. For more information, call (724) 349-9700.

■ **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Support** meets from 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesday at Riverfront Place, 810 River Ave., Suite 160, Pittsburgh. For more information, call (412) 322-5680 or (800) 721-7437.

Help in the fight against cancer

The American Cancer Society has a vast volunteer network in which individuals can make a difference in the fight against cancer. Volunteers can help with the Road to Recovery program by serving as volunteer drivers or coordinators. Drivers donate their time and resources to take patients to treatment and back home again. They also provide encouragement and support. Drivers must have a valid driver's license for the state where they live. They must also have a safe, reliable vehicle and proof of automobile insurance. Vol-

unteer drivers must have a good driving history and be in good health.

Driver coordinators help schedule the rides. Coordinators can work whenever it's convenient for them, one day a week, during the evening, or weekends. All it takes is as little as four hours a week of your time, organization, and communication skills to make a major impact on the well-being of cancer patients in your community. To learn more about becoming a volunteer, contact Kristen Hillebrand at (888) 227-5445 Ext. 1078.



By **Rob Kasisky, R.P.H.**



APOTHECARY

Coffee May Lower Diabetes Risk

A recent analysis of 18 studies involving over 450,000 people revealed that coffee drinkers appear to have a lower risk for diabetes. People who drank 3-4 cups of regular coffee a day (more was better) had a 25% lower risk of type 2 diabetes compared to people who drank less (or no) coffee. Those who drank at least 3-4 cups of decaffeinated coffee had a 35% lower risk. Researchers said that because both types of coffee seem to reduce risk, the benefit is probably from compounds in the coffee other than caffeine.

401 North 4th St., Indiana (Beside The Dairy Queen)
Phone 724-349-9170
Toll Free 1-888-463-9170

Home Health Answers



ARTHRTIS AT HOME

Home healthcare providers can help those who suffer from arthritis to manage their condition and remain independent. A physical therapist can help with the safe use of home care products such as walkers, canes, wheelchairs and lifting devices. An exercise regimen can help individuals active in order to maintain muscle strength and movement in their joints. A home safety evaluation can help to prevent slips and falls, burns, or other incidents. If a client should require specialized assistance, an occupational therapist can help find new ways of doing things, which may include providing advice on special equipment and adaptations to the kitchen, bathroom or bedroom. In addition a well-balanced, healthy diet helps to maintain weight, alleviating extra pressure on hips, knees, and feet.

If you or someone you love requires at home help, please call us right away. Our professional staff is available to help both you and your loved one whether you need a skilled nurse, therapist, or you want to discuss the service options available to improve your circumstances. VNA provides the highest-quality, cost-effective services needed to maintain people in their homes for as long as possible ... Call (724) 463-6340 to learn what we can do for you.

VNA Visiting Nurse Association of INDIANA COUNTY
Compassionate Care Right At Home
www.vnaindianacounty.com