

# Health & Fitness

Chris Mayer, Reporter 248-901-2589

on the web: [www.oonline.com](http://www.oonline.com)

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## TALK TO THE MIRROR



FLORINE MARK

## Tuning into nature can result in a happier you

Ah, what a beautiful season.

Mother Nature is showing off her splendor all around us, but as the bright green leaves of summer begin to fall and the days grow shorter, we tend to spend more time indoors.

Many people find the approach of winter somewhat depressing. They tune out the outside world and tune in the television set for hours and hours every week.

The truth is we are healthier and happier when we're in tune with the natural world around us. Nature gives us cues for change, so rather than fight them, take joy in the natural world. It's all in your attitude!

When you look out the window at the leaves curling up and falling to the ground — instead of closing the blinds and feeling blue — appreciate the brilliance of those fiery red leaves against the blue sky.

Go out and breath in the crisp air, take a walk in the woods, visit the cider mill and pick up some sweet Michigan apples.

### A perfect time to exercise

Fall can actually be the perfect season to exercise outdoors.

You are less likely to become dehydrated from the hot, humid temperatures of summer (always drink 6-8 glasses of water daily, nevertheless) and more likely to have increased stamina.

Whether you prefer a game of tennis, a walk in the woods, or rollerblading, open your front door on a sunny, autumn day and enjoy the outdoors.

There are certainly some fall days that are spent indoors, however, and we need to make adjustments in our lives as the weather changes. But staying indoors doesn't mean sitting in front of the television with a bag of potato chips.

On a cold, windy day there are plenty of healthy ways to spend your time indoors. Pop in an exercise video and reward yourself with a bubble bath after your workout. Or use weights to tone your muscles.

Cans of soup work great as hand weights if you don't own weights. And plastic milk containers filled with water and tied to each end of a broomstick make for an inexpensive barbell.

Riding a stationary bike is excellent for your cardiovascular health as well as building muscle tone and burning fat. And it's the perfect time to catch up on your reading.

If biking is not your forte, how about some laps in the pool at a nearby high school or gym? You see there are plenty of ways to continue a healthy lifestyle when the weather keeps you indoors.

### Avoiding trouble

Resist the temptation to become lazy or depressed. That's when we start tating out of boredom and feeling worse about ourselves — and the vicious circle spins round and round.

Try to follow a productive cycle. Listen to your body and realize that although the seasons change and you may have to adapt your daily routines as a result, your body needs the continuity of a healthy lifestyle. If you continue to exercise and eat healthy foods throughout the changes in your life, you can move forward into your next "season" with a strong burst of energy and feel fabulous.

I ready every one of your letters and I love your comments!

Please keep writing me with any questions, inspirational stories or suggestions for upcoming articles to: "Talk to the Mirror," Weight Watchers Corporate Communications, P.O. Box 3072, Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3072 or (248) 553-7106.

Who knows? You may just see your name in an upcoming article!

## Help yourself combat back pain

If you suffer from back pain, you're not alone.

The good news is that there are ways you may be able to help yourself take care of back pain at home.

■ Take it easy. If you think you've hurt your back, ease up on the pressure you may be putting on it. Studies on acute back pain show that a few days of restricting your activity, and taking the appropriate over-the-counter medication, may be all that many people really need to allow the strained muscles to relax and unbind.

■ Adjust your daily routine. When you are in pain, you may need to make adjustments to the way you approach daily activities. Sit as little as possible and only for short periods. Choose a firm chair with a straight back. When you have to bend, don't bend from the waist, use your knees.

■ Ice, then heat. Remember this rule: Ice for the first 48 hours, then heat. Ice and heat can alleviate local pain that comes from muscle and ligament strain. Ice slows swelling and inflammation and acts as a local anesthetic but, after 48 hours, it loses its effect. Using heat afterwards increases blood flow to the deep tissues and relaxes muscle spasms.

■ Inflammation and over-the-counter medications. To aid in healing and relieve pain, use of over-the-counter medications such as ibuprofen, naproxen sodium, aspirin or ketoprofen is often recommended. These types of drugs are intended for short-term use, so never use one for more than a week unless it is recommended by your health care professional.

■ Massage. If you have a willing companion, gentle massage may provide some relief by stretching tight muscles and ligaments.

■ When to see a health care professional. Most simple back pain will start to improve within two or three days of restricted activity and

over-the-counter medication. If you find yourself taking more and more pills to relieve back pain, or if the pain is getting worse, you should contact your doctor, or call the National Centers for the Spine toll-free at 1-800-699-BACK.

The National Centers for the Spine is a joint venture of the Mayfield Spine Institute in Cincinnati and the Cleveland Clinic Spine Center in Cleveland, Ohio.

The toll-free service is staffed by specially-trained registered nurses who answer questions and provide educational materials to back pain sufferers.

Before you perform any home remedy, check with your doctor first to make sure it's right for you.

## HEALTHY LIVING

**Healthy Living** spotlights Oakland County-related health and medical news and information. To submit information, write: Healthy Living, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Or fax: (248) 644-1314.

### NATURAL WAYS TO AVOID COLDS

Many humorists have said that a cold untold lasts seven miserable days. Treated, it goes away promptly in just one week.

Despite this well-known adage, Americans spend billions of dollars annually on over-the-counter drugs for colds and flu.

**Echinacea** — Herbalists use echinacea to jump-start the immune system; it is recommended that you take courses of echinacea three weeks on, followed by one week off.

**A Stress-free Life — Working**

potatoes, will ensure you get your recommended daily allowance of vitamin C.

**Zinc** — Non-meat sources of zinc include whole grains, beans, nuts and nut butters, and pumpkin and sunflower seeds. Zinc lozenges are extremely popular weapons on the prevention front, and have been shown to dramatically reduce the lifespan of colds and flu.

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**A Stress-free Life — Working**

make a commitment to a heart-healthy lifestyle through exercise while raising money for the American Heart Association.

**HUSTLE FOR HEART**

The American Heart Association and WMXD-FM (92.3) will present "Hustle For Heart" on Friday, Nov. 7 at the Museum of African American History (315 E. Warren Ave.).

This event, which is a fundraiser for the American Heart Association of Great Detroit Chapter, is a fun way to educate and encourage people to

make a commitment to a heart-healthy lifestyle through exercise while raising money for the American Heart Association.

**The Hustle**, one of the most popular dances in the history of the Detroit dance scene with over 20 variations and styles, will be demonstrated. For ticket details or additional information, call 1-800-968-1793 ext. 851.

### MEDMAX AND SENIORS

**MedMax**, the new health-care superstore chain, has developed a health awareness program for senior citizens. The program includes use of a free computerized blood pressure, pulse rate and weight monitor machine with audio capability.

These machines, which can announce useful health tips and stock brochures of important information on various health care resources, are located near the pharmacy department in all MedMax stores.

This program also includes periodic Health 'N' Fun Aras, featuring speakers and health screenings for vision, hearing, cholesterol levels and bone-densitometry evaluation.

Health care professionals, including pharmacists, physicians, nurses, podiatrists, chiropractors, physical therapists and representatives from health organizations such as the Michigan Diabetic Association will be in attendance to answer questions.

The next Health 'N' Fun Aras is scheduled at the following Troy locations from 11

a.m.-1 p.m. **MedMax** 1643 Rochester Rd. Oct. 29  
MedMax 740 John R. Rd. Oct. 30

**HURON VALLEY-SINAI HOSPITAL**  
Huron Valley-Sinai Hospital (1 William Carls Drive) in Commerce will offer the following programs in November:

### Personal Stress Management

**Date:** Monday, Nov. 3  
**Time:** 7 p.m.-9:30 p.m.  
**Location:** Huron Valley-Sinai Hospital

**Fee:** \$30 (includes relaxation tape and workbook)

For more information or registration details, call 1-888-DMC-2500 (1-888-362-2500) by Friday, Oct. 31

### Living with the Pain of Fibromyalgia

**Date:** Thursday, Nov. 6  
**Time:** 7 p.m.

**Location:** Huron Valley-Sinai Hospital's Conference Center

**Fee:** None. This is a free seminar.

**Info:** Fibromyalgia is a condition of chronic muscle pain and fatigue that affects approximately two percent of the U.S. population. Internist and Rheumatologist Ruth Kozlowski, D.O., will provide information on fibromyalgia including symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and tips for living with chronic pain.

For more information or registration details, call 1-888-DMC-2500 (1-888-362-2500) by Tuesday, Nov. 4.

### Healthy Crockpot Cooking

**Date:** Wednesday, Nov. 12  
**Time:** 6 p.m.-7 p.m.  
**Location:** Huron Valley-Sinai Hospital

**Fee:** None. This is a free seminar. Learn to utilize a crockpot for quick and healthy meal preparation.

Learn how to plan low-fat, healthy meals and modify recipes from a registered dietitian.

The next Health 'N' Fun Aras is scheduled at the following Troy locations from 11

a.m.-1 p.m. **MedMax** 1643 Rochester Rd. Oct. 29  
MedMax 740 John R. Rd. Oct. 30

## Treating nocturnal asthma may enrich daytime activities

Nighttime asthma symptoms, particularly those that cause awakenings, may impair a person's concentration and attention during the day. But a new study published by the American Lung Association suggests that treating nighttime asthma may improve one's daytime cognitive performance.

Netherlands-based doctors studied adults with with nighttime — or nocturnal — asthma. These adults had significant variations between their daytime and nighttime lung function, which is a sign of an even worse asthma.

The subjects first underwent a series of tests for attention, mental flexibility and concentration. The results were then compared with the results of people who did not have asthma but took the same tests. The subjects with asthma scores significantly lower than the non-asthmatic subjects.

The asthmatics then received either the asthma drug salameterol, an inhaled long-acting beta-agonist, or fluticasone, an inhaled corticosteroid, or a combination of both twice a day for six weeks. None of the study subjects had taken either of these drugs before the study began.

After six weeks of treatment, the subjects' lung function had improved both during the day and at night, regardless of which of the three treatments they received.

When researchers repeated the cognitive tests, they found that the asth-

matics' daytime cognitive performance had improved in all three treatment groups to levels comparable to those of the non-asthmatic subjects.

"While we did not study children with nocturnal asthma, there is evidence that school grades tend to be lower in these children, suggesting they would benefit from treatment that controls their nocturnal asthma," said lead study author Dr. D.S. Peatman of University of Michigan.

Thomas Abraham, M.D., president of the Michigan Thoracic Society, said: "This study clearly shows us the importance of managing asthma. If the patient is a child, it is especially important to work closely with the physician, parent, school and child to keep the lung disease under control. Children and adults can accomplish fantastic feats when their asthma is well managed."

### Open Airways for Schools

Children can learn about their asthma and how to control it through the American Lung Association of Michigan's Open Airways for Schools program.

This program is offered to children ages 8-11 years old.

If you would like OAS to be implemented in your school, or if you would like more information on childhood or adult asthma, call the American Lung Association of Michigan at 1-800-LUNG-USA.

## Studies continue on important topic

A recent study has been made on a subject touching more women than ever before — exercise and menopause. This topic has gained more recognition since the baby-boom generation is upon us. Furthermore, in the medical journal *The Physician and Sportsmedicine*, Dr. Kathleen M. Hargarten reports that "exercise decreases risk factors for coronary heart disease, decreases the risk of osteoporosis, strengthens pelvic structure and improves mood."

Dr. Hargarten teaches at the Medical College of Wisconsin and has studied the aerobic effect on middle-aged women.

Heart disease is a special concern to women at menopause because of the diminished estrogen production. We need estrogen to protect our bodies against increased levels of cholesterol. Exercise will increase the production of high-density lipoproteins (HDL cholesterol) which leads to artery-clogging plaque buildup.

Dr. Hargarten's personal prescription leans toward the moderate side — three vigorous 20-minute aerobic exercise sessions per week. I say that is a good start. It should be increased to three 30-minute sessions, eventually increasing the amount of sessions to four or five times weekly.

Estrogen loss can also lead to the brittle-bone disease known as osteoporosis. You need exercise to put stress on bones, which in turn stimulates them to become stronger. I am small myself but have the bones of an elephant.

According to Dr. Hargarten, exercise and estrogen have been shown to be the best therapy against bone loss in post-menopausal women. Evidence from studies suggests that exercise also helps prevent — and possibly reverse — bone loss caused by aging.

Barbara L. Drinkwater, a researcher on osteoporosis, noted: "Exercise can prevent a bad condition from getting worse. It would prevent that bone loss that would occur from being inactive." Drinkwater went on to state that "the value of exercise alone is not very impressive." This confirms our theory that calcium intake is also important.

Dr. Hargarten also says there is no evidence that exercise can help a woman control hot flashes. However, exercise can fight atrophy of the muscles and ligaments of the pelvis, and this is an important point because atrophy can increase the risk of prolapse. Hargarten praises Kegel exercises, which involve tightening of the pelvic diaphragm muscle to fight these problems.

In addition, studies show that middle-aged women who exercise regularly displayed less anxiety and depression. We know exercise gives a person the feeling of accomplishment. It adds a feeling of independence and control to one's life. Being in control enhances our self-esteem and quality of life. Just ask me. I'm in that baby-boom generation.

*Myrna Partrich is co-creator of The Workout Co. in Bloomfield Hills. She is an appointee to the Michigan Council on Physical Fitness and the Michigan Fitness Foundation. Send questions or comments to Myrna Partrich, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009.*