

Health Wire

Quick Tips for Living Well



Music Calms Presurgery Nerves

Soothing music reduced pre-op jitters in a recent study of 152 women and men. The volunteers received a shot of the anti-anxiety drug midazolam or listened to the song “Weightless” for 3 minutes before getting a nerve block for pain control. They also took a quiz about their anxiety level. Anxiety dropped more with the medication, but music was effective enough that it could be an option.

Source: Regional Anesthesia & Pain Medicine, July 18, 2019.

Risky Antibiotic Use

Up to 66 percent of adults in the U.S. take antibiotics without a valid prescription, and as many as 48 percent store leftover antibiotics for later, according to an analysis of 31 studies. That can be ineffective

and even dangerous, the researchers say. Antibiotics might be inappropriate for your infection, and such misuse might spur the growth of antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria.

Source: Annals of Internal Medicine, July 23, 2019.

Eat to Cut Colon-Cancer Risk

In a recent study, people who ate the lowest amounts of fruit, veggies, and whole grains—foods that fight inflammation and contain antioxidants—had a 48 percent higher risk of colon cancer than healthier eaters. Chronic inflammation and low antioxidant levels promote DNA damage and may lead to cancer.

Source: Nutrients, June 21, 2019.

Apple Shaped? News You Need

Carrying too much belly fat may increase insulin resistance, inflammation, and cholesterol levels, even for those who aren't overweight. Normal-weight women with waistlines of 34½ inches or more were 31 percent more likely to die than those with slimmer middles, according to a recent large study of women done over 24 years. Overweight and obese women also faced a higher risk if they had wide waistlines. “Central obesity” raised the risk for fatal heart disease by 28 to 53 percent and fatal cancer by 19 to 26 percent. Another study of both genders found that obesity and wide waists may lead to reduced gray matter.

Sources: JAMA Network Open, July 24, 2019; Neurology, July 24, 2019.



A Warm Bath for Better Sleep

People who had a warm shower, bath, or foot soak before bed fell asleep 7 minutes faster and rated their sleep quality as better than it was on nights without warming up this way, according to a recent review of

13 sleep studies. The researchers, from the University of Texas at Austin, say that it increases blood circulation at the surface of the skin, which promotes sleep because it helps lower the body's core temperature.

Source: Sleep Medicine Reviews, Aug. 1, 2019.

A Migraine in Your Mug?

Downing three or more caffeinated beverages in a single day hiked the risk of a migraine that day by 40 percent for migraine sufferers who usually drink just one, a small study conducted in Boston found. Migraine risk increased with the number of caffeinated drinks.

Source: The American Journal of Medicine, Aug. 8, 2019.



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On Your Mind

> Question of the Month

What are the best (and safest) slippers to wear around the house?

SKIP THE SLIPPERS, slip-on shoes, and bare feet at home, and go with lace-up athletic or Oxford shoes with a 1-inch heel and a firm sole, says Douglas Richie Jr., D.P.M., an associate clinical professor of biomechanics at the California School of Podiatric Medicine at Samuel Merritt University in Oakland. Going barefoot or wearing slippers or socks without shoes increases your risk of a fall. A 2016 Australian study, for example, found that women who wore slippers tended to shuffle their feet and have more heel slippage, which could throw them off balance, than those who wore shoes that tie.

PACKAGED-FOOD FACTS

Q What are ultra-processed foods, and is it okay to eat them?

A Sugar-sweetened drinks, sugary cereals, packaged baked goods, chips, certain energy bars, and some heat-and-eat meals fall under the umbrella of ultra-processed foods. “They can pack a lot of calories, sodium, and sugars with little or no fiber, good fats, lean protein, or the nutrients you find in fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts,” says Lisa Young, Ph.D., R.D.N., an adjunct professor of

nutrition at New York University. Recent studies suggest that ultra-processed foods may hike the risk of some cancers, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. So stick with whole and minimally processed food as much as possible.

SUSSING OUT STEM CELL THERAPY

Q I’ve been seeing ads for stem cell therapy. Is this treatment helpful?

A The Food and Drug Administration has approved the use of “baby” cells—which can ultimately develop into

blood, brain, or other cell types—for disorders related to blood cell production, such as blood and bone marrow cancers. But hundreds of businesses in the U.S. offer the therapy for problems like chronic pain, osteoarthritis, Parkinson’s disease, macular degeneration, and multiple sclerosis. In those cases, treatment can cost thousands of dollars (it’s usually not covered by insurance) and might not help you. Unapproved stem cell therapy has also been linked to blindness and infections. Make sure any treatment you consider is for an approved use or is part of a clinical trial with an Investigational New Drug (IND) application.

WHEN IT’S HARD TO BRUSH

Q My achy hands make it hard to brush and floss. What can I do?

A You can adapt your oral-health tools to fit your needs, says Britta Magnuson, D.M.D., an assistant professor in the division of oral medicine at Tufts University. Use a toothbrush with a wide, easy-to-grip handle, or insert your brush into a tight-fitting piece of foam tubing or a bicycle handlebar grip. An electric toothbrush is another option. For flossing, try a floss pick, which holds the floss for you, or a water flosser, Magnuson suggests.

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