



FALL 2010

# Health Report

## Capture Some Cardio

+ **Doing something you  
enjoy helps you stick  
to an exercise plan.**



**H**ere's a simple fact: Cardiovascular exercise improves your heart health. In other words, working your heart boosts your overall health.

Cardio exercise can help lower blood pressure, manage weight, improve cholesterol levels and build strong bones. Plus, if active people do develop cardiovascular disease, it's typically later in life or not as severe.

### Know the Goals

The American Heart Association recommends moderate-to-vigorous aerobic activity for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. Your heart is a muscle, so it makes sense that exercising it improves function.

You can break up your cardio into shorter bursts of activity that total 30 minutes—for example, 15 minutes before you head to work in the morning and 15 minutes during your lunch break. But, you should always aim to

reach 50 to 85 percent of your maximum heart rate, which is roughly determined by subtracting your age from 220. [Calculate your target heart rate and learn more at [www.mayoclinic.com/health/target-heart-rate/sm00083](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/target-heart-rate/sm00083).]

### Get Physical

Get your heart pumping throughout the week with these easy—and low-cost—activities:

- Take a brisk walk.
- Go jogging.
- Swim at your local gym.
- Begin a biking routine.
- Follow a cardio workout DVD.
- Join a soccer team.
- Start a pick-up basketball game.

It's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting any exercise program. Then enjoy the full benefits of a heart-healthy routine.

## Backpacks Done Right

Today's hefty school supplies and books make backpacks a must for any student. But used improperly, backpacks can cause serious back strain. To prevent discomfort and injury, follow these tips for selecting and carrying backpacks:

- Choose backpacks with wide, padded straps and a cushioned back.
- Pack light, keeping the total weight under 15 to 20 percent of the carrier's weight. If your child leans forward to compensate for the bag's weight, it's too heavy!
- Place heavier objects in the center of the backpack, and use all the pockets.
- Lift a heavy backpack by facing it, bending at the knees, lifting with your legs and putting the straps on one at a time.
- Always use both arm straps and the waist strap. They should be snug, but not tight.

Rolling packs are a good alternative to backpacks, but they need to be carried up stairs and can be difficult to pull through snow.

## A WORD ABOUT GERD

If you suffer from heartburn several times a week or experience regular acid indigestion, then you might have gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD.

The esophagus is the tube that carries food and liquid from your mouth to your stomach. GERD occurs when the muscle at the end of your esophagus doesn't close correctly. Stomach materials can leak back up into the esophagus, causing irritation.

**To relieve your symptoms, start by making simple lifestyle changes:**

- Limit alcohol and spicy, fatty foods.
- Eat smaller meals.
- Maintain your ideal weight.
- Don't eat close to bedtime.

If these don't help, talk to your doctor. Medication or surgery may be options for you.

## What Does the Smokeout Mean to You?

**D**o you smoke? Perhaps your family or friends can't kick the habit? The Great American Smokeout can help.

The American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout has been around for more than 30 years. The event focuses on the harmful effects of smoking and encourages people to quit for good, using the many resources available.

This year's event is set for Thursday, Nov. 18, but any day is a good day to quit—or inspire somebody you know to quit.

symptoms include sleepiness, anxiety or anger, chest tightness, restlessness, depression, dizziness and increased appetite.

You can help yourself and others trying to quit by starting or increasing an exercise routine, going to a movie or suggesting a good book—any activity to distract from cigarette cravings. Celebrate smoke-free days, and stay positive through any slip-ups. Keep as a constant reminder: quitting is hard and may take a few tries, but the health results are worth it.

Improved overall health is the best reason to stop smoking. Just 20 minutes after quitting, your heart rate and blood pressure go down. Within three months after your last cigarette, your circulation and lung function improve, and your heart attack risk is down. After about one year, your risk of developing coronary heart disease is reduced by half. Five to 10 years after quitting, your likelihood of stroke is similar to a non-smoker. Fifteen years after quitting, your additional risk of heart disease is the same as those who never smoked.

While the results are tremendous, the process can be very tough. Withdrawal



► **Learn more** about quitting and the Great American Smokeout at [cancer.org/smokeout](http://cancer.org/smokeout). There, you'll find local resources to help combat cravings.

## RIDING RULES: ► Protect Your Noggin

Make safety a no-brainer on your next bicycle ride by following this helmet advice, offered by the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- Buy helmets that meet Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) standards.
- Get the right helmet for the job: When you're on a bicycle, use a bike or multisport helmet, not a baseball or football helmet.
- Bike helmets can be "soft" or "hard." Both types meet CPSC standards, but the soft shells may be less durable



and the hard shells tend to be heavier. Choose whichever option you're more likely to wear and fits you best.

- Wear your helmet squarely on top of your head. It should cover your forehead, without tipping back. It shouldn't shift or slide around.
- Always wear the chinstrap. It should be snug, but not tight.

And don't forget, passengers also need helmets. Head protection for infants and toddlers is typically the lighter, soft-sided form. Babies under 1 shouldn't wear helmets or travel on a bike. And, you can find out more about state helmet laws at [www.bhsi.org](http://www.bhsi.org).

## Flu Vaccine: Fact vs. Fiction

**T**he flu vaccine remains our best defense against the virus, health experts agree. For anybody who still has doubts about getting the vaccine, let's debunk a few myths so you don't miss your shot at prevention.

► **MYTH: "I had the shot in 2009, so I don't need one this year."**

**FACT:** The vaccine available in 2010 is updated from last year's. The current vaccine fights flu strains that research suggests will be common this year.

► **MYTH: "My 8-month-old child is too little for a flu vaccine."**

**FACT:** In general, it's recommended that infants over age 6 months get the vaccine. The following groups should also be vaccinated: pregnant women, people 50 and older, those with a chronic disease and people who work with children or the elderly. All these groups are at risk for serious health complications from the flu.

► **MYTH: "I don't need the vaccine; I've got antibiotics to fight the flu."**

**FACT:** The vaccine will prevent you from getting the flu or from developing a bad case of the flu.



Antibiotics shouldn't be used as a preventive medication, and aren't intended to fight diseases caused by viruses, like colds and the flu.

Talk with your doctor about whether the flu vaccine is right for you and your family. To learn more flu facts, visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov).

## A SURPRISING SOURCE OF HBP

The American Heart Association recently reported that consuming fewer sweetened beverages might help lower blood pressure.

According to the study, the average American adult drinks 2.3 beverages a day containing sugar or high-fructose corn syrup, including soda, fruit drinks, lemonade and fruit punch. By reducing this number by just one serving, adults can lose weight and improve their blood pressure.

Given the significant health risks associated with high blood pressure, this is news worth taking to heart. Lowering your blood pressure can reduce the likelihood of heart disease, congestive heart failure, stroke, vision loss and kidney disease.

What's more, there aren't any obvious signs of high blood pressure, and that's why it's so dangerous. The best way to confirm whether you have it is to visit your doctor for a checkup. And if your numbers come in higher than 120/80, how about cutting out those sweetened drinks and switching to water to start bringing those numbers down?



## Dealing With Back Aches and Pains

Most of us will experience back pain at some point. Prepare for this almost inevitable fact of life by learning how to safely relieve lower back pain.

**Rest right:** Start by taking pressure and weight off your back. Achieve this by laying on the floor on your back and either placing pillows under your knees, or bending your hips and knees and resting your feet on a chair.

**Keep moving:** Resting your back for one or two days is fine, but any more and your back muscles could weaken. Instead, force yourself to walk around for a few minutes every hour. Stretch your back muscles by laying on your back with your knees bent and slowly raising your left knee to your chest. Press your lower back against the floor and hold for 5 seconds. Do 10 of these exercises for each leg.

**Find comfort:** Medications that relieve pain and swelling can make staying active easier. For painful back spasms, use a heating pad for about 20 minutes.

If your pain lasts longer than a few weeks, explore other treatments with your doctor.



## Make Time for Break-FAST

It's true what you've heard: Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Eating a healthy meal first thing refuels your body after many hours without food and lowers the chances that you'll binge later in the day. Folks who don't eat breakfast tend to feel sluggish and irritable, and often indulge in unhealthy snacking.

If you barely have time to brush your teeth in the morning, let alone prepare a meal, don't despair. Just redefine breakfast. Instead of grabbing fast food on the way to work, use that time to whip up something healthy at home.

Just be sure to focus your breakfast on protein, whole grains and fruits. For a tasty and healthy morning meal, budget a few extra minutes for this bacon-veggie scramble recipe.



## Turkey Bacon-Veggie Scramble

### Ingredients:

- 2 egg whites
- 1 slice turkey bacon
- 1 scallion, chopped
- 3 mushrooms, chopped or quartered
- Pinch of reduced-fat cheddar cheese, shredded

### Instructions:

Set medium skillet coated lightly with cooking spray to medium high heat. Cook the scallions and mushrooms until tender. In another skillet, cook turkey bacon. Add the eggs to the veggies and scramble. Add a pinch of shredded cheese to taste. Cut the turkey bacon and stir it in. Serve alone or on an English muffin or whole-wheat toast. *Serves 1*

### Nutrition Information per Serving:

(without English muffin or toast) 86 calories, 11.3g protein, 3.6g carbohydrates, 3.2g fat

## Chicago Regional Council of Carpenters Welfare Fund

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