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Health & Wellness News

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Fitness: Top Fitness Trend Focuses on Fun

According to a survey by the American Council of Exercise, one of the top fitness trends today is “exergaming” – playing physically active video games like Wii Fit, Wii Sports, and EA Sports Active. These exergames involve players in various forms of physical activity—such as dancing, bowling, tennis, and yoga—as the way to interact within the game.

For anyone who spends a significant amount of time playing video games for entertainment, switching to these active games can be a safe and fun way to incorporate more physical activity. Studies have shown that exergame activities burn up to twice as many calories as sedentary video games. And, scientists at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center have found that playing active video games is comparable to moderate-intensity walking in terms of energy expenditure.

Bottom line: Although exergames are no substitute for “real” sports and fitness activities, they can have a positive effect on stress levels, weight management, and overall fitness and health.



Health Observances

July

- Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month
- UV Safety Month

August

- National Immunization Awareness Month
- Children’s Eye Health and Safety Month

September

- Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month
- Leukemia & Lymphoma Awareness Month
- National Sickle Cell Month
- Prostate Cancer Awareness Month
- National Cholesterol Education Month
- Fruit and Veggies – More Matters Month

Sources: “Active Video Games A Good Alternative to Moderate Exercise for Kids, Study Suggests.” ScienceDaily, July 17, 2009. www.sciencedaily.com.
“American Council on Exercise (ACE) Announces Test Results on Fitness Benefits of Nintendo’s Wii Fit and PC-Based Exergame, Dancetown.” November 2009. www.sys-con.com
Lieberman, Debra. “Dance Games and Other Exergames: What the Research Says.” University of California, Santa Barbara, April, 2006. www.comm.ucsb.edu.
“Top Ten Fitness Trends for 2010.” www.acefitness.org.

Nutrition:

The Cancer Connection: What You Need to Know about Summer Grilling

Ah, it's the good ol' summertime—when longer days and warmer temperatures find almost everyone cooking on a gas or charcoal grill. Most people are unaware that grilling animal products, such as chicken, beef, pork and fish, can produce cancer-causing compounds called heterocyclic amines (HCAs) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). These substances are formed mostly from fat being exposed to intense flame or by the smoke created when fat burns.

So, before you fire up the grill this summer, keep the following information in mind to greatly reduce your risks:

- Clean your grill regularly. The grease and fat that build up from cooking can contribute to the formation of PAHs.
- Trim away excess fat, the main source of HCA and PAH formation. Leaner cuts of meat will drip less and cause fewer flare-ups which can char food. This char contains the highest concentrations of PAHs and HCAs.
- Use marinades made from olive oil, citrus juices, and herbs. Marinating can decrease HCA formation by as much as 99% percent, and a scientific study from Kansas State University found that certain herbs (rosemary, basil, mint, thyme, oregano and sage) also dramatically reduce the formation of HCAs.
- Don't overcook foods. Well-done meat increases cancer risks because HCA concentration increases with heat and time. Cook meat at lower temperatures—even if it means cooking longer—and raise the grilling surface further away from the heat source.

Follow these tips, and you still can enjoy grilled meats in moderation this summer.

Sources: Fayed, Lisa. "Grilling and Cancer: Is There Harm in Grilling Meats?" About.com Cancer "The Five Worst Foods to Grill." The Cancer Project, August 2005. www.cancerproject.org
Riches, Derrick. "Healthy Grilling." About.com Barbecues & Grilling



Favorite Recipe:

Olive Oil-Rosemary Marinade

Ingredients:

3 - 5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
 1/2 lemon, juiced
 3 - 5 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
 1 - 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, chopped
 Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Combine all ingredients. Pour over food and marinate for at least 30 minutes before grilling.

From *Essential Grilling Guide* by Marlena Spieler as posted to MC-Recipe Digest on www.astray.com/recipes

Who's Looking after Your Health? The Importance of Having a Primary Care Physician

The United States health care system is very complex, especially as requirements related to health care reform are implemented. And, if you are trying to navigate through this new and changing world of health care without having a Primary Care Physician (PCP), it is even more difficult. Primary Care Physicians provide:

- Preventive care, like regular check-ups and physical examinations, which can show early signs of possible diseases.
- Diagnosis and treatment for everyday health concerns, common illnesses, and ongoing medical conditions.
- Coordination with medical specialists if your condition worsens or requires additional treatment.

Your Primary Care Physician also offers an understanding of your medical situation that you won't find elsewhere. He or she knows your family and personal medical history and looks at your overall health status to coordinate your care. If you visit an emergency room or urgent care center for non-life-threatening health needs, the physicians there are focused more on the immediate need rather than your continuing care.

Not having a Primary Care Physician can affect your financial health as well. When you use an urgent care center or the emergency room for non-life-threatening health visits, it means higher out-of-pocket expense for you...and an increased cost to your health plan. For example, a trip to the emergency room costs \$1097 on average, and these services are usually covered at only a percentage after your deductible is met. Urgent care centers are cheaper than the emergency room, but still not as affordable as treatment from an in-network Primary Care Physician, where your only responsibility is typically the patient co-payment—an average cost of \$20 - \$30. The cost to your health plan is also significantly less, allowing your employer to continue to provide affordable health benefits.

If you don't already have a Primary Care Physician, it is important to select one. Ask your friends, families, and co-workers for recommendations, but make sure that the provider is included in your network before you schedule an appointment. The provider's office staff can tell you whether the provider is part of your network. Or, you can use the following steps to find a provider in your area or check that a provider is part of your network:

- Go to www.mbstpa.com.
- Click on "Provider Search."
- Click on the appropriate network, i.e., MedCost Preferred, American Healthcare Alliance, etc., to find a provider near you.
- If your selected network's web site has the option to search by specialty, choose "Primary Care Physicians."
(Search options will vary by network.)



Lifestyle:

Need Help with Your Health and Wellness Goals? There's an App for That!

We all know how important health and wellness are—and how difficult they can be to achieve and/or maintain in our crazy-busy lives. Now the technology that helps you stay connected to family, friends, and work also can help you connect with your health and wellness goals. Check out these **FREE*** health and wellness apps for your phone.

Calorie Counter by MyFitnessPal, LLC (for Droid, iPhone, and Blackberry) helps you keep track of calories consumed, calories burned through exercise, and progress toward personal fitness and diet goals. Download it at www.myfitnesspal.com/tools.

Features:

- 750,000+ food database, updated daily
- Barcode scanner allows you to scan an item's barcode and find its match in the database
- Nutrient tracker tallies all major nutrients, such as calories, fat, protein, carbs, sugar, fiber, cholesterol, and more
- Recipe calculator lets you enter your own recipes and calculate nutritional content
- Cardio and strength training tracker lets you record all exercise, including sets, reps, and weight

Good Food Near You by Global Fitness Media (for Droid, iPhone, and Blackberry) is a location-based search app to find the healthiest restaurant food options in your area. Download it at www.goodfoodnearyou.com.

Features:

- Full nutrition information for menu items at over 220,000 U.S. restaurant locations
- Search results sorted by closest distance, lowest calories, lowest carbs, or lowest fat
- Map to the restaurant location

Fooducate by Fooducate, Ltd (for Droid and iPhone) was created by dietitians and allows you to scan food product barcodes to see nutrition highlights. Download it at www.fooducate.com.

Features:

- Database of over 200,000 products and growing daily
- Analysis of each product's nutrition panel and ingredient list
- Notification of excessive sugar, additives and preservatives, confusing serving sizes, etc.
- Suggestions for healthier alternatives

*These applications were free at the time of publication, but prices are subject to change without notice.

