

WHOLESOME TIMES

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What is Physical Activity Good For?

Not only is physical activity good for overall health, it can benefit osteoporosis and bone density levels.

To improve bone density, try resistance training and weight bearing activities like:

- Walking
- Jogging
- Dancing
- Free weights and machines

Combining physical activity and good eating habits is a great way to get healthy. This is something the whole family can do together. Calcium is also an important part of our diets. Studies have shown that calcium derived from dairy products helps to shed pounds. Stick to low fat varieties and limit quantity.



Women's Health - Muscles, Bones, and Calories (like mother, like daughter, and son?)

By Andrea Mullen

There are two things we keep hearing in life that we can't avoid: *death* and *taxes*. There is also another fact that we have little control over: we can't pick our parents. So, what's the big deal and what does this have to do with obesity? If our parents are healthy, eat well, don't smoke, have normal blood pressure and cholesterol levels, it's a great deal. If, however, they have the opposite traits – obesity (more than 30 pounds overweight), high blood pressure and cholesterol levels or have suffered a heart event – it is a big deal. We, too, have a predisposition to follow in their footsteps. During our childhood and teen years, our parents served as role models for nutrition and exercise patterns just as we pave the way for our children's eating and exercise habits. Frequent visits to fast food eateries and over consumption of high fat foods is not a good pattern.

What is the number one killer of women? *Heart disease*. Surprised? What causes heart disease? Let us count the ways: obesity, hypertension (high blood pressure), high cholesterol levels (especially the level of low density lipoproteins- the bad cholesterol), inactivity, stress, depression, smoking, diabetes. We shouldn't be surprised that our life expectancies are actually going to be lower because of inactive life styles and larger portion sizes. How much food do we really need to eat?

Let's be frank. How often do we look around and see overweight teens and young children accompanied by parents with same the physical characteristics? Childhood obesity and diabetes is on the rise. How many pounds have you gained since your wedding day or since graduating from school? Even if excess pounds are not the issue, have you checked your blood pressure and cholesterol levels lately? Being thin does not mean we are fit; carrying a few extra pounds does not mean we are unfit.

Need a wake up call? According to an article in the August issue of *Connecticut Magazine*, about 3,700 people will die in Connecticut because of complications caused by obesity. This number scares me and I hope it scares you, too. You can do something about unhealthy habits before it is too late. It can be as easy as walking, swimming, or dancing. Find something you enjoy doing that elevates the heart rate and burns calories.

There are 3,500 calories in one pound (the average Dunkin Donut muffin is about 300 calories). By gaining 5 pounds a year, you will add 50 pounds at the end of 10 years. Consider the extra burden added to our aging knees, hips, and backs. To lose one pound per week, we need to burn 250 more calories a day and eat 250 fewer calories a day. Find a buddy or join a gym. Turn activity into something positive - a change in your lifestyle.

Got stress in your life? Stress increases the production of cortisol, a hormone that tells our bodies to hold onto what it has. This correlates to the "fight or flight" syndrome. Exercise is a great anti-depressant and mood lifter. Yoga is also a nice way to tune out of life and tune into your body. Slower breathing techniques and nice, long stretches can help lower stress, build strength and flexibility. When is the last time you spent a quiet moment keeping company with the sound of your breath while streams of relaxation flow from the head to the toes. Don't knock it until you try it. The time is NOW, to assure there is a "later."

Andrea Mullen has been in the fitness field since 1986. She has teaching certifications from the American Council on Exercise, YogaFit, Dancing Thru Pregnancy and others. **Fitness for Women and Not Just Yoga** is located at 135 Cherry Street, Milford. 878-9642; visit their Web site at www.notjustyoga.com for class schedules and more information.

Rising Health Care Costs

By James Rinere

Whether you are a sole proprietor, small business owner, or a decision maker at a Fortune 500 company, you are probably faced with the prospect of increasing health care costs and the conundrum of what to do about it. Many people that I speak with every day feel that there is no end to this dilemma and it may be a problem that is costing your business in excess of 30% of bottom line costs. Do you know that the average annual increase in health insurance premiums has increased steadily over the last 10 years, from a low of .8% in 1995 to a high of 14% in 2003?(1) (The current average annual increase that we have seen in the State of Connecticut for this year is 10%) There seem to be more and more insurance products being offered, with promises of helping you drive your health care costs down, and that may be true for a time, but ultimately, without a shift in lifestyle and behavior - it all catches up with us at some point in time.

We need to begin with understanding many of the reasons for the rising health care costs. We are fortunate to live at a time when medical knowledge and technology are being used in amazing ways to help us live longer and better lives. The cost of this care, however, is rising at an alarming rate, making it increasingly difficult for individuals, families, and businesses to afford care for themselves and their employees. In recent years, we have seen tremendous growth in the cost of health care services, along with an increase in the number of services Americans demand. When the cost of each service is multiplied by the greater demand for these services, the result is overall higher costs.

There are some major drivers that contribute to the higher costs; demographics, medical technology, and prescription drugs.

Other factors are consumer demand, government regulation, and cost shifting for treating the uninsured, litigation, and waste in the administrative structure of the overall system.

What is the solution for the business owner? There are many different steps that one can take to reduce costs in the short term, but for longer term impact, it starts with the education of your employee population as to the expense of insurance premiums and the value of the employee's overall benefit package. We need to shift the paradigm of how we view and utilize our health care and our health insurance coverage. The days of blindly walking into a hospital emergency room and receiving care, without knowing or caring about the cost of that treatment, have to end.

One recent insurance product addition to the market, which is an attempt at shifting the paradigm, has been Consumer Directed Health Plans, in the form of Health Savings Accounts (HSAs). These programs are not for every individual and/or company, and they can be combined with more traditional options so that people in the organization can make different decisions based on their own needs. I have seen dramatic results in both premium savings and personal health care buying decisions as a result of putting in one of these programs. I personally have purchased an HSA for me and my family and deciding whether to buy a generic prescription over a brand name with a cost differential of \$150, an expense that would come out of my own bank account, was a fairly simple and straightforward. The shift in the decision process occurred when I realized that "my

money" was being used for that medicine, not some large and innocuous insurance company. That was a decision that I would not have looked at in the same way a few years ago.

Lastly, finding an adviser that is well versed in the latest trends for Long Term Benefit Plan Strategies, Employee Cost & Utilization Education, Consumer Directed Health Plans, Healthy Lifestyle, Alternative Medicine, etc... is key. To accomplish cost savings and controls, employers must work closely with insurance agents or brokers that are willing to present the full variety of creative insurance plans that are available today. Many insurance agents don't have the familiarity with new insurance plan designs, and their incentive to learn the new plans is minimized because the

commissions they earn on such plans are significantly reduced compared to traditional plans. Employers need to be selective in the health insurance buying situation. You truly need a trusted source for navigation through this complex industry, someone who can help you make the most of your benefit dollars.

The overall bottom line is - you must face this business issue head on, as it will not be going away any time soon.

1. Source: Kaiser Family Foundation/Health Research & Educational Trust survey of employer sponsored health benefits.



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Infrequently Discussed Men's Health Issues

By Diane Morgan M.S.O.M., L.Ac.,Dipl.Ac., (NCCAOM)

In my work as an acupuncturist and herbalist, men's health issues are rarely discussed. The purpose of this article is to bring to the forefront some of the issues that affect men. Men in our culture often don't get to express emotions other than anger. Men suffer in silence often for a lifetime with erectile dysfunction, impotence, low libido, infertility, prostatitis, chronic pelvic syndrome, following symptoms their bodies manifest.

Once men experience impotence there is an increased health risk for heart attack and stroke. One of the earliest indicators of diabetes is erectile dysfunction. Obesity impairs fertility and 80% of men with erectile dysfunction are obese. Nothing is more devastating to men than the lack of ability to perform sexually and sire children. The men in my acupuncture practice express deep anguish over the loss of self identity because they are unable to perform sexually.

General patterns found in male infertility are low libido, thin and watery seminal fluid, loss of erection, and inguinal testicular pain. At the other extreme and coming from a different cause, excessive or manic libido can also cause infertility. High white blood cells in semen indicate infection, as well as ejaculate that is discolored, thick, cloudy, yellow or red. Male fertility begins to decline from the age of 35. In our western culture we make an assumption that our technological advances will conquer the nature of aging. This assumption is incorrect as our bodies continue naturally to become less fertile.

One of the most common urological disorders in men over 50 is prostatitis. The prostate provides the ejaculation force. Acute bacterial prostatitis symptoms include fever, chills, low back pain, body aches and dribbling urination. This form of prostatitis must be treated with antibiotics. Untreated acute

bacterial prostatitis will turn into chronic prostatitis which manifests as significant episodic pain in the pelvic region lasting a minimum of three months. Pain can be felt in the perineum, anus, low back, tip of the penis and urethra, pain or discomfort can be felt during or after ejaculation lasting from hours to days. Surgery may be necessary but acupuncture can help ease symptoms.

Traditional Chinese Medicine indicates that four factors must be present for an erection. There must be adequate shen, Yin/blood, Yang/Qi and Jing. The shen affects the desire and the rising process. There must be adequate blood and Yin for filling. The Qi and Yang must flow to generate sexual heat. The Jing must be present for ejaculation to occur. Acupuncture points on the body aid with these issues.

Acupuncture and herbs not only effectively treat and deal with each of these issues, but restores the overall balance and health of all the body systems, bringing the body, the mind, the emotion and the spirit back into balance. There are pelvic Qi Gong exercises designed to be useful in combating premature ejaculation. There are herbal formulas to work with obesity and to promote overall health and wellness.

Chinese Medicine has much to offer as a complement to our more traditional Western Medicine.

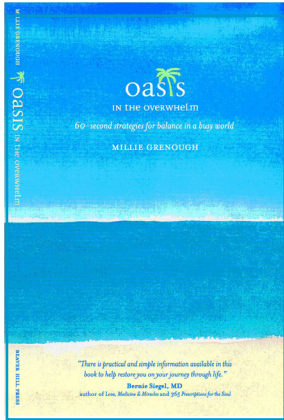
Erectile dysfunction is divided into six classes based upon symptoms:

1. **Psycho-emotional disorders** are subdivided into anxiety (especially sexual), depression, and relationship problems.
2. **Central nervous system dysfunction** that affects the nervous system of the penis includes Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, disc herniation, MS CVA and pelvic organ nerve damage. Nutritional deficiencies include alcoholic, smoking, and drug use causing erectile dysfunction by the depletion of neurotransmitters. Diabetes is the single most common disease associated with erectile failure. Since diabetes is a metabolic disease with vascular and nervous system complications and an erection involves all levels of the nervous system from the brain to the nerves, damage anywhere along this path may be cause for erectile failure.
3. **Hormonal factors** such as an excess of the hormone prolactin has been shown to lead to reproductive sexual dysfunction, as well as, hyper and hypothyroidism, diabetes mellitus, and renal failure.
4. **Disorder of the arteries**-failure to fill includes the following common risk factors for arterial insufficiency; hypertension, hyperlipidemia, tobacco smoking, diabetes mellitus, perineal or pelvic trauma from horseback riding and bicycling.
5. **Failure to store** suggests that inadequate venous occlusion is one of the most common causes of vasculogenic impotence. Improper closure of the venous valves or enlarged penile veins can cause the drainage of venous blood away leading to flaccidity.
6. **Side effects of medications** cause erectile dysfunction. These include anti-psychotics, antidepressants, anti-hypertensive drugs, and anti-allergy drugs. Heroin and cocaine also result in impotence. Vasoconstriction from cigarette smoking causes venous leakage due to the contractile effects on the smooth muscle. Alcohol in large quantities causes a decrease in libido and temporary impotence.

Diane Morgan of **Baihui Acupuncture & Herbal Clinic** is a board certified acupuncturist with a *Master of Science in Oriental Medicine* and is state licensed in CT. You can reach Diane at 203-876-9373 or by email at baihui@optonline.net.

OASIS in the Overwhelm

By Millie Grenough



LIKE MANY OF MY CLIENTS AND COLLEAGUES, I am ambitious and somewhat driven. And like many people I know, I am pretty bullheaded. It took a near-death accident to make me alter my fast-paced daily routine.

The bike accident left me with three concussions and a ruptured kidney. It turned out to be what my mother would call “a blessing in disguise.” I was forced not to work for three months. During that time, I had the chance to ask myself the

really big questions: *Who am I? What am I here for? I mean, really, what am I on this earth for?*

For the first time in a long time, I stopped. I realized that prior to my accident I had been going full speed in the fast lane. Me: a Type A person and proud of it? You bet. Stress? Yeah, lots of it. Guess I had to crash to get it that stress really can kill us.

I knew that if I wanted to survive, I had to change. I realized that, if I wasn’t careful, when I went back to work I would get right back into the fast lane: I’d be the lead rat in the race. I needed personal strategies that would be quick, easy and enjoyable or else I wouldn’t do them. So I found and honed four *60-second strategies* that I could do almost anywhere, any time. In the past

ten years, I have taught these *OASIS Strategies* to hundreds of people. As they practiced the strategies, they became healthier, felt happier. They realized that they wouldn’t need to quit their jobs, ship their kids to Alaska, or join a monastery to get some peace. If they gave themselves oases every once in a while, they could deal with the overwhelm.

So What About Stress in These Times?

Here’s the BAD news. Do you know that stress in humans

- contributes to 80% of major illnesses,
- is responsible for 75% to 90% of visits to doctors’ offices, and
- costs businesses as much as \$300 billion a year?

Since 9/11, stress has increased exponentially. Hundreds of clinical studies cite stress as a factor in conditions such as heightened anxiety, fatigue, inhibited memory function, elevated blood pressure, lowered sexual functioning, and poor work performance. Any of these sound familiar to you? If so, read and heed.

The GOOD news about stress: stress is a natural part of life. You need it: it is what gives you your juice. Your blood wouldn’t even circulate unless your heart pushed it. As Dr. Hans Selye, the grandfather of stress physiology said, *Stress is the spice of life*. Programs that aim to get rid of stress are off base: the goal is to have the right relationship with stress. As in food, the portions are important. Too little spice, you’re bland. Too much spice, you’re in trouble. No spice, you’re dead. The right balance, you’re tasty.

The GREAT news about stress: the most controllable stressor in the world is the human mind. In other words, *you* are in the driver’s seat. The latest research about the brain’s neuroplasticity affirms that you can train your brain to move away from craziness and towards sanity. By the choices you make – and even by what you think – *you can re-wire your own brain towards health and happiness*.

So what does all this have to do with you?

Sure, life happens. But what you choose to do with it every minute is your call. You have the power to increase or decrease your stress level, increase or decrease your health and happiness. Your life is here, now. How do you want to dance with it? My hope is that you will be smarter than I. Don’t wait till you have a bike accident or a heart attack to be kind to yourself. Take a minute right now. Breathe. Really breathe. Stand up. Stretch. Look out the window to see the bigger picture. Right this minute, think of two things that you are grateful for. Know that you are alive. And that today IS the first day of the rest of your life. How do *you* want to live it?

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