APRIL 2007

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BecauseWeCare

Healthy Ideas For A Healthy Workplace

...And Health Care for All?

Recent numbers from the American Cancer Society show that the total number of cancer deaths in the United States fell between 2003 and 2004. Despite this overall progress, people of different races are still affected differently by cancer. For example, from 1999 to 2003, African American women had a nine percent lower cancer rate than white women but an 18 percent higher mortality rate.

Some disparities may exist because certain communities have inadequate access to health care. "That's very troubling because many people of color are resigned to a greater risk of disease and to dying early," says Dr. William Riley, president of Meharry Medical College in Nashville.

Meharry Medical College, founded in 1876 to train former slaves to provide medical care in their communities, is dedicated to preparing physicians to serve the nation's underserved populations. Riley says, "Even though 85 percent of our students are African American, we train them to feel equally comfortable treating someone from Appalachia or from any minority community. It's a challenge to transcend the cultural barriers."

> "If we could see an equal drop in cancer deaths among people of color as we've had overall, **that would be a victory for everyone."**

Meharry students take courses in "medical Spanish" as part of their studies and have to be prepared to counter cultural "myths" in some communities, like the belief that having cancer surgery always causes the disease to spread.

Inadequate health care has huge consequences for everyone since patients who don't get care, for whatever reasons, end up coming in for help when they are much more seriously ill. That means their treatment is more complicated, has a lower chance of success, and can cost four or five times more than early detection and treatment might.

Dr. Riley says the solution is a joint, ongoing effort by schools, businesses, the government, and the medical community, adding, "If we could see an equal drop in cancer deaths among people of color as we've had overall, that would be a victory for everyone." *–Jeff Silver*

Exercise at Every Age

Exercise is an important part of life; it can have a positive impact on your health and well-being, whether you are trying to lose weight, prevent disease, or reduce your stress level. And whether you're young or just young at heart, it's never too late to get moving.

When beginning an exercise program, it is important to talk to your physician. Her or she can offer exercise guidelines and recommendations based on your age and health. You might want to consider working with a fitness professional as well.

Once you've made a pledge to exercise, kids and adults alike can find a variety of activities to meet their fitness needs. Walking is a great activity, and it enhances cardiovascular heath. Well-rounded fitness programs can also include strength training and stretching for flexibility.

Keep in mind that you don't have to be at the gym to exercise. Garden with your family, wash and wax your car, play basketball with the kids, or push a loved one in a stroller or wheelchair at the park. No matter how you choose to be active, regular exercise can be a positive habit your whole life through.

CLICK HERE to learn about more ways to be active.

Can't Sleep? Check Your Breathing

Do you wake up frequently during the night? Do you envy people who can sleep until morning? Your problem may not be stress or anxiety but a medical condition that literally takes your breath away.

Sleep apnea (*apnea* is Greek for "without breath") affects more than 12 million Americans who repeatedly awaken from sleep. Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is the most common type and is caused by soft tissue in the back of the throat collapsing. When this happens, the affected person stops breathing and awakes briefly to resume breathing. This can happen hundreds of times in a single night.

Sleep apnea is linked to high blood pressure and other cardiovascular disease, memory problems, weight gain, impotency, headaches, and accidents. There are many treatments for sleep apnea, including special pillows, foam wedges, oral devices that prevent the tongue from falling back into the neck, and breathing machines. Avoiding alcohol and losing weight may also help.

Sleep apnea is a serious condition that can compromise your health and quality of life. If you think you suffer from sleep apnea, you should contact your physician and discuss testing for the condition.

The Benefits of Enjoying Mother Nature

Spending time outdoors can help reduce stress levels and promote relaxation. It can also be a great way for seniors to stay active. Many doctors and rehabilitation centers recommend gardening as therapy for seniors and the handicapped because it is an enjoyable type of exercise that:

- Encourages the use of motor skills – like walking, reaching, and bending – through activities such as planting seeds
- Improves endurance and strength
- Can help prevent diseases like osteoporosis

As an added benefit, cultivating fruits and vegetables provides nutritious, home-grown edibles that can help reduce the risk of cancer when eaten as part of a healthy diet.

Garden equipment and tools can be modified to meet the needs of seniors, too. Tools are now available with lightweight handles to keep the wrist steady and provide a firmer grip. For those with physical limitations, gardening also can be done while sitting on a chair instead of kneeling or bending over.

With proper planning, older adults can reap the mental and physical benefits of gardening for many years to come.

CLICK HERE to learn more about the power of fruits and vegetables.

Minorities and Cancer: *What You Should Know*

Although cancer can affect everyone, it affects everyone differently. Depending on your race, you may be at higher risk for some cancers. For example, according to the American Cancer Society, African Americans have the highest death rate and shortest survival of any racial or ethnic group in the United States for most cancers. Hispanic/Latino Americans are also more likely than non-Hispanic whites to die from most cancers. African Americans are especially prone to prostate, lung, and breast cancers, while Hispanic Americans are most likely to develop prostate or breast cancers. Both minority groups are more likely to find cancer in its later stages.

The key to improving cancer survival rates for any ethnic group is finding cancer early. Getting American Cancer Society-recommended screenings is a way to help prevent cancer before it starts. Other ways to reduce cancer risk include: eating a variety of healthy foods and limiting alcohol intake; engaging in regular physical activity; maintaining a healthy weight throughout life; and avoiding the use of tobacco.

National Minority Cancer Awareness Week is April 15-21 – if you are a minority, ask your doctor about your cancer risk.

CLICK HERE to learn more about detecting cancer early.

and Get Fit with Self-Defense

When it comes to protecting yourself in a dangerous situation, it's important to act fast. And knowing what to do could help save your property – or your life. That's why many people across the country are choosing to enroll in self-defense classes.

Self-defense classes can run the gamut from weekend workshops to intense martial arts training, but many focus on teaching safety tips in combination with practical physical moves that participants can use when facing an attacker. Often, basic classes are offered at hospitals, community centers, colleges, or even through the local police department as a community service. Many classes require no previous experience or training and are open to people of all ages and fitness levels.

It's important to remember, too, that signing up for a self-defense class could help protect you in more ways than one: the physical activity involved in many classes can help you get and stay active, which in turn can help lower your risk for health problems like heart disease, diabetes, and some types of cancer.

Whether you're working to stay safe or to get more exercise, taking a self-defense class can be one smart move.

Glorious Fruit Salad

1/4 cup fresh lime juice
1/4 cup honey
1/4 cup chopped fresh mint
1 (three-pound) cantaloupe, halved and seeded
1 (12-ounce) basket strawberries, hulled and halved
4 kiwis, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch pieces
1-1/2 cups seedless grapes

In a small bowl, whisk together lime juice, honey, and mint. Set aside.

Using a melon baller, scoop out cantaloupe into a large bowl. Add strawberries, kiwis, and grapes.

Pour syrup on top of the prepared fruit and toss to coat. Let stand at least 15 minutes for flavors to combine.

Cover and chill if not serving immediately.

Serves eight.

Approximate per serving: 137 calories, 1 gram of fat

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Crazy for Cantaloupe

What Americans commonly refer to as a cantaloupe is actually a muskmelon – named for its sweet, musky fragrance. The true "cantaloupe" hails from the Sabine hills near Tivoli, Italy, and is not grown much outside of the Mediterranean.

Cantaloupes, or muskmelons, have tan, "netted" rinds and pale orange flesh. Cantaloupe is delicious served all by itself and comes essentially ready to eat in its own bowl – just slice it in half and scoop out the seeds. It also makes a great addition to any fruit salad or as a healthy dessert alternative.

Melon pieces wrapped in prosciutto (cured Italian ham) have also become a popular antipasto.

Cantaloupe is an excellent source of vitamin A, beta carotene, and folate, and one serving of cantaloupe provides a full day's recommended daily allowance of vitamin C.

Ripe cantaloupes have a sweet fragrance, are slightly heavy for their size, and yield a little to pressure at the stem end. Whole melons will last for a week if they are kept cold. Cut melons, wrapped in plastic and refrigerated, should be consumed within a few days.

In the Next Issue

- **Homemade Spa Products**
- **Keeping Pests at Bay**
- **American Cancer Society Relay For Life®**

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All content for BecauseWeCare is provided by the American Cancer Society.

Meeting the growing consumer and employee demands for increased health services on the job, the American Cancer Society Workplace Services program provides corporate tools and resources to initiate or enhance existing employee health and wellness services.

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