

Health and Safety Matters



Time to renew...to be active....to spend time outdoors! One of the best ways to get you active outdoors is walking.



Walking does more than just get you from A to B. Here's the lowdown on how it benefits every bit of your body.

YOUR LUNGS. Breathing is an essential exchange: every inhalation feeds your cells and tissues

with oxygen; every exhalation rids your body of harmful waste like carbon dioxide. "Oxygen is essential fuel for the functioning of every cell in your body," says Anna Day, a respirologist and spokesperson for the Canadian Lung Association. During aerobic activity, your body needs more oxygen, and your lungs compensate by breathing faster and deeper, working the muscles that expand and contract your lungs. When you're fitter, your body uses oxygen more efficiently, so you get more out of each breath. That translates into breathing more easily on your walks, and having more energy in your everyday life.

YOUR BRAIN. When you exercise, your heart pumps more blood and oxygen through your body, including to your grey matter, and you "generate new neurons in the hippocampus, the area of the brain responsible for some aspects of memory," says Michelle Voss, a PhD candidate at the University of Illinois. How working out boosts your brainpower isn't fully understood, but exercise has been linked to better problem-solving skills, multi-tasking and memory. Walking also stimulates the production of the brain's feel-good chemicals, including endorphins. That calms you and has a cathartic

effect, making you more relaxed, says Stephen Prentice, head of anatomy at the University of Waterloo. And according to the Mayo Clinic, exercise can even help prevent or decrease anxiety and depression.

YOUR MUSCLES. Each time your heel strikes the ground, you engage your calves, and as you propel your body forward, you use your shins. Above the knee, your quadriceps, hamstrings and glutes also help push your foot and knee forward and lift your thighs up, says Jaclyn Dionne, a walking coach based in Mississauga, Ont. It's not just your lower body that's working: when your bent arms swing back and forth, you're working the muscles of the upper back between the shoulder blades. And as you maintain a good posture – standing up straight with your shoulders back – your abs and back work to stabilize you. If you walk on a flat surface, you'll feel most of the effort in the muscles below the knee, but hit an incline and your thighs and glutes will feel it. And since you're activating more muscles, especially the larger ones in the thighs, your calorie burn will increase.

*Excerpt from October 2010 Issue
Chatelaine Magazine*

Walking & Foot Care

Proper foot care is essential for good health and well-being. Follow these shopping tips to make sure you choose the best pair of shoes.



- ❖ Shop for shoes at the end of the day when your feet may be swollen. Take time to walk around the store with the shoes on.
- ❖ Never "break in" a shoe. Shoes should feel comfortable right away.
- ❖ Ensure there is a full finger width between the longest toe and the end of the shoe.
- ❖ Avoid restrictive footwear such as high heels with pointed toes or shoes that are too narrow.

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- ❖ Look out for key features of a good shoe:
 - Soft uppers (everything above the insole)
 - Minimal seams
 - Firm but cushioned soles
 - Removable insoles
 - Strong heel counter (hard piece of material at the back of the shoe)
 - Rockered bottom (sole of the shoe designed to reduce forefoot pressure)
 - Extra depth in the toe box (to avoid pressure on tops of toes)
- ❖ Get help buying shoes from a trained footcare specialist such as a chiropodist, who can measure the length and width of both of your feet.

Source: Healthy Together



A Quick Guide to Allergy Relief

Don't let your seasonal sniffles keep you down. Learn the best ways to treat them.

The Facts

What is a seasonal allergy?

It's an inflammatory reaction to something in the environment that causes unpleasant symptoms, such as sniffles, sneezes, and swollen sinuses. If you're predisposed to allergies, the first time your system deems a compound (such as pollen) to be potentially dangerous, your body mass-produces antibodies called immunoglobulin E, or IgE. IgE attaches to mast cells, which are concentrated in the nose, the eyes, and the lungs and which many experts believe help protect the body from invaders. When the allergen returns, IgE latches onto it, signaling the mast cells to release

histamines, chemicals that make you sneeze or cause your eyes to tear and itch.

How do you develop allergies?

There's a genetic component to most allergies. If one of your parents has them, there's an almost 50 percent chance that you will, too. It takes repeated exposure for allergies to develop fully, so several seasons might pass before a condition like hay fever sets in—which is why most kids don't develop allergies until they're 4 or 5. Seasonal allergies continue to develop throughout life. "New allergies can occur in any decade, but generally they tend to peak at around age 20," says Linda Cox, an allergist and assistant clinical professor at the Nova Southeastern University College of Osteopathic Medicine, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

When do seasonal allergies strike?

The season typically begins in early spring, when trees, including oak, cedar, elm, birch, ash, maple, and walnut, start to pollinate. Grasses, such as timothy, Bermuda, orchard, and some bluegrasses, germinate in late spring and early summer. Weeds, like sagebrush, tumbleweed, and ragweed—by far the most prevalent seasonal allergen, affecting 75 percent of sufferers—kick in during late summer and early fall. (Goldenrod, often confused with ragweed, is sometimes blamed for allergy symptoms, but it actually produces sticky, non-airborne pollen.) Many people think that if they can just make it to fall, they're in the clear. Unfortunately for some, moldy leaves, an often overlooked allergen, can extend symptoms almost until winter.

There's good news for flower lovers, though. "Regardless of what you see on TV, you're never going to have a strong allergic reaction to a bunch of roses," says New York City ear, nose, and throat physician Jordan S. Josephson. People don't have allergies to actual flowers. If you find yourself sneezing after a flower delivery, it's probably due to grasses, ferns, or molds in the soil or the bouquet.

Diagnosis and Treatment

How do you find out whether you're allergic and what you're allergic to?

A seasonal allergy can feel like a cold, with symptoms such as chronic congestion, a runny nose, and itchy, watery eyes. But allergies produce a thinner nasal discharge, won't prompt a fever, are 14 times more likely than colds to trigger a migraine headache, and tend to last longer. If you've been sniffing for weeks on end, it's probably time to get tested.

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Luckily, that part is simple. The skin-prick test is the most common. A doctor introduces a number of allergens, sometimes as many as 60, by quickly pricking the patient's arm or back. If redness, itching, or swelling occurs within 15 minutes, there's an allergy match. "The process is so superficial, it's quite painless," says Cox. Alternatively, or if that test is inconclusive, a doctor might try a more sensitive intradermal shot, which injects allergens deeper below the skin.

What are the most effective treatments available?

Don't be stoic. It's important to seek relief from your symptoms, because without treatment, allergies may worsen over time. Allergic reactions can spread deep into the lungs, putting you at an increased risk for asthma. In fact, up to 40 percent of long-term allergy sufferers also have asthma. Another 40 percent will develop sinusitis, an infection of the sinuses.

For mild to moderate allergies, drugs—some prescription, some over-the-counter—are usually enough. All work similarly, by trying to stop a reaction in its tracks. "The earlier you hit the medicine cabinet, the better your results," says Daniel Ein, an allergist at George Washington University, in Washington, D.C. You might want to take something before going outside, or consistently treat yourself before the start of the season.

- **Antihistamines**

They prevent cells in the body from releasing histamines, which trigger the cold-like symptoms. Oral over-the-counter options are often combined with a decongestant (generally tagged with a D) for more relief.

Pros: Treat throat and nasal itching, watery eyes, a runny nose, and sneezing. Newer brands, like Claritin and Allegra, claim not to cause drowsiness.

Cons: Alone, they won't help congestion or inflammation. Some brands can cause drowsiness.

- **Nasal Corticosteroids**

Stronger than antihistamines, these prescription sprays, like Flonase, block inflammation and have been shown in some clinical studies to be the most effective remedy for allergy symptoms. (An oral version is available for extreme cases.)

Pros: Very effective at treating congestion.

Cons: May take a week or so to bring noticeable improvement. There's also a higher risk of mild side effects—including nosebleeds, irritation, and a burning sensation—than with other allergy medications.

- **Decongestants**

Non-prescription and fast acting, decongestants are available orally or as a nasal spray. They work by constricting blood vessels, which in turn reduces the amount of fluid leaked from the nose.

Pros: Instant relief from congestion.

Cons: Duration is temporary. While the nasal sprays, such as Afrin, act faster than oral alternatives, like Sudafed, most doctors discourage their use for more than three or four days because of their strong "rebound effect." Basically, once you start, you'll need more and more to get the same relief. Long-term use can produce chemical burns inside the nose.

When to Consider Allergy Shots

If allergies send you to bed or medications produce unpleasant side effects, immunotherapy might be for you. This treatment builds up long-term immunity to one or many allergens by continually exposing patients to greater doses of them. Covered by most insurance plans, immunotherapy typically reduces symptoms by 90 percent. That said, it's also a lot of work. Over three to six months and well before allergy season, patients receive one or two injections a week of specific allergens in increasing concentrations. Then, once or twice a month over the next three years, patients get maintenance shots of the maximum concentration reached during the build-up phase. Some people maintain their improvement indefinitely, but others relapse. Most relapses occur within three years of stopping treatment.

If you're needle-shy, ask your doctor about sublingual immunotherapy, a method that substitutes under-the-tongue pills or drops for the shots. The dose is higher, but the treatment appears to be safer, and experts say the results compare well with injections.

Minimizing Symptoms

- Check the pollen count and try to stay inside when levels are high.
- Close windows at night and delay morning jogs. Plants release pollen from 4 a.m. to 8 a.m., so the longer you stay inside during this period, the better.
- Run the air conditioner and invest in a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter, which is required to capture 99.97 percent of the particles passing through it. Because pollen from shoes, animal paws, and other things can get embedded in carpets, consider replacing permanent carpets with washable throw rugs. Be wary of non-airborne allergens, such as dander, mold, and dust, which can aggravate seasonal allergies.

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- Keep your lawn mowed short to prevent it from sprouting pollen-producing buds. Consider substituting non-pollinating plants, like ivy and myrtle, for grass. Get rid of leaves and compost piles quickly, before molds form.
- Wear natural fibers. Synthetics, such as polyester and nylon, can create a pollen-attracting electric charge when rubbed.
- Shower and wash your hair before going to bed. Daytime pollen can collect on your body, meaning you'll be breathing it in all night.
- Breathe through your nose. When it comes to keeping out foreign bodies, noses are much better designed than mouths.
- Avoid secondhand smoke. A study in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* found that exposure to secondhand smoke exacerbated allergic responses.
- Clean the house often. Reducing the levels of pollen, dust, and mold in your home will reduce your symptoms. Use vacuums, mops, and microfiber dust cloths, which collect particles, rather than brooms, which recirculate them into the air. Buy pillowcases and mattress covers made from fabrics labeled "dustproof," and wash them frequently at hot temperatures to eradicate dust mites and pollen. Don't air-dry bedding or clothes, since damp cloth attracts pollen. And wipe down windowsills with a damp cloth before going to bed so you can breathe and rest easy at night.

Drug-Free Allergy Remedies

Change your diet. Some foods, particularly fruits, have the same allergens in them as tree pollens. Therefore some people who are allergic to tree pollens may have symptoms, such as tingling in the mouth, when they eat certain fruits. This is called oral allergy syndrome. Fruits this can occur with include apples, pears, and cantaloupes. Peeling or cooking the fruit usually prevents the reaction.

Use saline drops. Squirt a salt-water or saline solution up your nose once or twice a day using a bottle with an angled tip to rid nasal passages of residual pollen.

Try acupuncture. Results are preliminary, but a handful of studies have found that acupuncture can be effective at reducing seasonal allergy symptoms, according to a review published in the 2006 edition of *Current Opinion in Allergy and Clinical Immunology*.

Source: realsimple.com
By Sara Reistad-Long

RECIPES

How to Grill Vegetables

Make room on the grill for veggies.

Veggies to Avoid

Most vegetables love the grill. But a few--like cucumbers, celery, and most leafy greens--don't do well because of their high water content.

Best for the Grill

A lot of veggies do well on the grill, but some *really* stand out--asparagus, corn, eggplant, mushrooms, peppers (bell or hot), onions, even cabbage.



Grilled Asparagus

Ingredients

- 1 pound fresh asparagus spears, trimmed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- Preheat grill for high heat.
- Lightly coat the asparagus spears with olive oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- Grill over high heat for 2 to 3 minutes, or to desired tenderness.

Nutritional Information

Amount Per Serving Calories: **53** | Total Fat: **3.5g** | Cholesterol: **0mg**

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Marinated Vegetables

Most vegetables cook better and are less likely to stick if marinated first or brushed lightly with cooking oil. For added flavor, sprinkle grilled vegetables with fresh herbs.



Marinated Barbequed Vegetables

Ingredients

- 1 small eggplant, cut into 3/4 inch thick slices
- 2 small red bell peppers, seeded and cut into wide strips
- 3 zucchinis, sliced
- 6 fresh mushrooms, stems removed
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped fresh basil
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced

Directions

- Place eggplant, red bell peppers, zucchinis and fresh mushrooms in a medium bowl.
- In a medium bowl, whisk together olive oil, lemon juice, basil and garlic. Pour the mixture over the vegetables, cover and marinate in the refrigerator at least 1 hour.
- Preheat an outdoor grill for high heat.
- Place vegetables directly on the grill or on skewers. Cook on the prepared grill 2 to 3 minutes per side, brushing frequently with the marinade, or to desired doneness.

Nutritional Information

Amount Per Serving Calories: **157** | Total Fat: **11.2g** | Cholesterol: **0mg**

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Grilled Corn

Perfect for grilling, corn even comes with its own wrapper.



Cajun Grilled Corn

Ingredients

- 6 ears corn, husked and cleaned
- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 6 tablespoons Cajun seasoning

Directions

- Peel back husks from the corn, remove strings and leave just a few layers of husk on the corn.
- Spread butter or margarine over each ear of corn. Sprinkle Cajun seasoning lightly over each ear, or to taste. Fold corn husks back over the corn. Wrap in foil.
- Place on grill for 25 minutes, turning occasionally. Unwrap foil, peel back husks and enjoy.

Nutritional Information

Amount Per Serving Calories: **278** | Total Fat: **17.4g** | Cholesterol: **41mg**

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Grilled Tomatoes and Mushrooms

Corn's frequent companion, the tomato, might not seem well-suited for grilling, but it works surprisingly well. Grilling also brings out the best in most mushrooms, especially portobellos.



Grilled Tequila Portobello

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup tequila
- 1/8 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons roasted garlic oil
- 1 lime, juiced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 large portobello mushroom, cut into 3/4 inch slices

Directions

- In a small bowl, mix together tequila, melted butter, roasted garlic oil, lime juice, and minced garlic. Let stand for at least 15 minutes.
- Preheat grill for medium heat.
- Brush grate with vegetable oil. Brush mushroom slices with tequila mixture, and place on grill. Cook until the mushroom slices begin to wilt, then turn and brush with more of the tequila mixture. Cook for a few minutes, until mushrooms are tender. Watch carefully so they do not burn.

Nutritional Information

Amount Per Serving Calories: **314** | Total Fat: **25.3g** | Cholesterol: **31mg**

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Depending on what you're grilling, you might want to cut larger veggies (like eggplants, squash, and onions) into smaller pieces.

Small vegetables like cherry tomatoes or sliced veggies work best threaded through kabobs. You can also wrap vegetables in heavy duty foil, though cooking in foil cuts back on that appealing smoky flavour.

Grilling times vary from veggie to veggie, but they're generally more delicate than meats. So keep a close eye on your vegetables.

FINAL WORDS

As we 'spring into summer', safety in the sun is something we all need to think about. We finish off this season's edition with these reminders on safety in the sun. Enjoy the season everyone!

Sun Safety Tips

Plan to be outside in the early morning or late afternoon.

- Stay in the shade and out of the hot sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- If you are in the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., wear long pants, long sleeves and a hat with a wide brim to protect your skin from sunburn.
- Wear sunglasses that provide **UVA** and **UVB** protection.
- Use a sunscreen lotion or cream that is **SPF 15** or more. **SPF** means Sun Protection Factor.
- Use a sunscreen that says "broad-spectrum" on the label. It will screen out most of the **UVA** and **UVB** rays.
- Put sunscreen on your skin 20 minutes before you go out and reapply 20 minutes after being out in the sun to ensure even application of the product and better protection.
- Don't forget your lips, ears and nose. These parts of your body burn easily.
- Sunscreen gets washed off by water and sweat. So, put more sunscreen on after you go swimming or if you are sweating.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,

contact the Consumer and Clinical Radiation Protection Bureau of Health Canada at 613-954-6699, www.healthcanada.gc.ca/ccrpb

Source: <http://hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/sun-sol/index-eng.php>

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