

This Holiday Season, Feast on Memories

A national survey found that the strongest families interacted with each other in fun and supportive ways. They also shared rituals and traditions, and created happy memories. Many families gather during the holidays. This is a perfect time to capture memories of the “good old days” – whether they were a century ago or just last year – that can be shared through generations. Here are some ideas for strengthening family relationships:

- **Have adults recall how they met their life partner**, what their wedding was like, the birth of their children, and other significant events during their lifetime.
- **Record childhood memories.** Children and grandchildren will love hearing about “the way it was.” Have your loved ones sing songs and recite poems they learned in school. Encourage them to talk about the clothes they wore, chores they disliked, and games they played.
- **Ask about favorite foods** – and have adults write down favorite recipes.
- **Have them recall the most outrageous thing they’ve done** and what they are the most proud of.



- **Ask about their memories of their parents and grandparents.** What stories or legends were told and retold?
- **Find out their favorite color and favorite songs.** Track down and play CDs of their favorite music. This is fun to do for all ages.
- **Construct a family tree** showing how everyone is related – but with a twist. Beside the names, list physical characteristics, talents and abilities, and jobs held.

If your loved ones haven’t kept up with photo albums, now is a good time to organize the pictures. Enlist the help of relatives so everyone is identified.

StoryCorps lists questions for memory-keeping: storycorps.org/record-your-story/question-generator/list

The University of Missouri has 365 ideas for building a strong family: tinyurl.com/2cktebu

If your loved ones are comfortable with it, make a video of them, use an audio recorder, or write down their stories. Regardless of the method, take the time to record memories before they are lost forever. Your great-grandchildren will thank you.

Child Trends Research Brief, August 2002.

StoryCorps. 2010.

Keep Your Blood “Lean”

Your blood fats can tell a lot about your health. **Cholesterol**, a blood fat, is measured as HDL (or “good”), LDL (or “bad”), and total. Total blood cholesterol is the number you typically receive when your doctor tests your cholesterol levels. Having even slightly abnormal levels in childhood and early adulthood appears to increase the risk of health problems in mid-life and beyond.

Triglycerides are the most common type of blood fat in your body. They are a major source of energy. Like cholesterol, they are produced by your liver or derived from foods. And, elevated levels appear to increase your risk of heart disease.

Researchers studied more than 300,000 people to see if there was a link between high triglycerides and heart problems. “We found that people with a genetic tendency for higher triglyceride levels also had a greater risk of heart disease,” says Dr. Nadeem Sarwar, lead researcher. More studies are sure to follow to see if lowering high triglyceride levels will reduce the risk.

To keep your blood “lean:”

- **Exercise regularly** – at least 30 minutes, 5 days each week.
- **Eat whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, fatty fish** (e.g., halibut, lake trout), nuts (e.g., walnuts, almonds), oatmeal, and oat bran.

- **Eliminate sugary foods** (e.g., cookies, soft drinks) and refined foods (e.g., white rice, white flour).
- **Don’t drink alcohol** – or at least limit yourself to one drink a day.
- **Replace saturated fats** (e.g., meat, full-fat dairy) with healthier fats (e.g., olive oil, trans fat-free margarine).
- **Cut down on snacks** to help maintain a healthy weight.

The Lancet. 2010.

Do You Know Your Numbers?
Find out here: www.wellsources.info/wn/cholesterol.pdf

Make Recurring Headaches Disappear

An estimated 29.5 million Americans – mostly women – suffer from severe, recurring headaches. There are many possible causes. Stress can trigger both migraine and tension-type headaches. Getting married, moving to a new home, or having a baby can cause stress. But studies show that everyday stresses – not major life changes – cause most headaches. Other common causes of chronic or recurrent headaches are sinus infections, hormonal changes, neck or back strain, temporomandibular joint disorder, and even eyestrain.

Migraines are vascular headaches caused by dilation and constriction of the blood vessels in the head. Headaches can also be caused by prescription medications, as well as by alcohol and illicit drugs. Although less common, headaches can be a sign of more serious implications, such as brain tumors or aneurysms.

If you are prone to recurring headaches, the American Headache Society recommends you practice “headache hygiene:”

- **Maintain regular sleep patterns.** Go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day.
- **Exercise regularly,** even if your daily routine changes (such as when traveling, when you have house guests, or when your workload increases). Do aerobic exercise for at least 30 minutes three times a week. This can help reduce the frequency or severity of migraines.
- **Eat regular meals,** and especially a good, healthy breakfast. Limit stress by avoiding conflicts and resolving disputes right away and calmly.



Some people find it helpful to take a daily “stress break” – a relaxation period that includes the following strategies:

- **Take slow, deep breaths.**
 - **Focus your mind** on a relaxing image or scene.
 - **Try soft, relaxing lighting** and sounds.
- **Avoid known triggers.** (See the list below.)
 - **Maintain the medication treatment plan** designed your physician.

American Headache Society. 2010.

What Triggers Headaches?

A combination of triggers – not a single thing or event – is more likely to set off a migraine, such as:

- Lack of or too much sleep
- Skipping meals
- Bright lights, loud noises, or strong odors
- Hormonal changes during the menstrual cycle
- Stress and anxiety, or relaxation after stress
- Weather changes
- Alcohol (often red wine)
- Caffeine (too much or withdrawal)
- Foods that contain nitrates, such as hot dogs and lunch meats
- Foods that contain MSG (monosodium glutamate), a flavor enhancer found in fast foods, broths, seasonings, and spices
- Foods that contain tyramine, such as aged cheeses, soy products, fava beans, hard sausages, and smoked fish
- Aspartame (NutraSweet® and Equal®)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2010.

Learn about migraines from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:
www.womenshealth.gov/faq/migraine.cfm

Heart Health Risks for Young & Old

Just because you’re young doesn’t mean you don’t need to pay attention to your health. A long-term study found that young adults with moderately high cholesterol levels were at increased risk of atherosclerosis 20 years later.

Atherosclerosis is a condition in which fatty material collects along the walls of the arteries, causing the walls to thicken and harden. Blood flow is reduced, and sometimes blocked, causing a heart attack or stroke. According to scientists, atherosclerosis can start in childhood.

Because high cholesterol doesn’t have many symptoms, it’s important for every adult to have it checked and to take steps to keep it in check.

High cholesterol is caused by a variety of factors, including eating too much saturated fat and cholesterol, and too little fiber and healthy fats (polyunsaturated fats such as corn oil, soy, and walnuts). Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes are high in fiber and cholesterol-free.

Annals of Internal Medicine. 2010.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2010.

ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR

Q: How can I lose weight if I have diabetes?

A: Go to www.wellsourc.info/wn/ask-weight-diabetes.pdf to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: paulaw@wellsourc.com, subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.

Health Challenge: “Eat Low-Glycemic Index Foods” available at: www.wellsourc.info/wn/HC-Eat-Low-GI-Foods.pdf. Low-GI foods reduce the risk of health problems. Eat whole grains, nuts, legumes, fresh fruits, and low-starch vegetables.