

HEALTH  
FITNESS  
NUTRITION  
WELL-BEING

# Matters®

## 10 FAST FACTS

**Eating a balanced,** high-protein breakfast helps you feel full longer, thereby potentially reducing the number of calories you consume through the rest of the day.

**A can of regular soda** can contain more sugar than a slice of cake.

**Get fit while watching your favourite fall shows** by exercising (push-ups, sit-ups, lunges, running on the spot) during commercial breaks.

**Try “walking meetings” at work.** Brainstorming as you walk generates results – plus everyone feels better.

**To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning,** have all gas appliances (e.g., furnaces, water heaters, fireplaces) professionally inspected at the beginning of heating season.

**When it comes to managing your stress,** know when to say “no.” Remember, it only took one more straw to break the camel’s back.

**Every extra pound of body weight** you carry exerts an extra four pounds of pressure on your knees when you walk.

**One medium-sized doughnut** (60 g) contains 242 calories, 14 g of fat, 205 mg of salt and 27 g of carbohydrate.

**Spot fat reduction through exercise is a myth.** You must lose body fat to reduce fat in any particular area. Exercise only tightens the muscles under the fat.

**Black beans are a rich source of anthocyanins,** powerful antioxidants that play a role in fighting both heart disease and cancer.



## 10 Ways to Take the Pressure Off

**They call it the Silent Killer.** You can’t see it or often even feel it, but its effects can be devastating to your heart and your overall health. High blood pressure (outside the generally accepted norm of 120/80) affects one in five Canadians, and almost half of these people don’t even know they have it because there are so few symptoms.

High blood pressure can damage blood vessel walls, which over time can strain and weaken the heart, and contribute to peripheral vascular disease and renal disease. Uncontrolled, high blood pressure can lead to heart attack, heart failure, kidney failure or stroke, which is why it’s so important that you control your blood pressure.

If you have high blood pressure (and even if you don’t), here are 10 simple ways to help take some of the pressure off.

- **Quit smoking** and avoid second-hand smoke. Smoking is a major contributor to high blood pressure.
- **Reduce your salt intake.** Avoid high-sodium cured meats, processed foods and salty snacks.
- **Limit alcohol** – no more than one (for women) or two (for men) drinks per day. (One drink equals 12 oz./355 mL of beer, 5 oz./148 mL of wine or 1 oz./30 mL of distilled spirit).
- **Reduce stress.** Pace yourself, limit commitments and take time to relax every day. Listen to soft music, nap, or take up yoga or meditation.
- **Adopt a healthy diet.** Focus on fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products and lean meats.
- **Limit caffeine.** Doctors recommend a maximum daily intake of 400 mg per day (or less), the equivalent of four cups of coffee. Switch to decaf.
- **Get a regular check-up** with your doctor to ensure you are controlling your blood pressure.
- **Create a support system.** Making lifestyle changes (like losing weight or quitting smoking) can be difficult. Enlist the help of friends and family to help you achieve your goals.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Losing as little as 10% of your body weight can dramatically reduce your blood pressure.
- **Exercise regularly** – 30 to 60 minutes a day, four to six times a week. Go for a walk, join a gym or do light strength training.

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# Carrot and Almond Cake

Makes 18 servings



2 ¾ c.	675 mL	ground almonds
1 ¾ c.	425 mL	finely grated carrots
¾ c.	175 mL	fine dry bread crumbs
1 ¼ tsp.	6 mL	baking powder
1 tsp.	5 mL	ground ginger
½ tsp.	2 mL	ground nutmeg
½ tsp.	2 mL	ground cinnamon
6	6	eggs, separated
1 ¼ c.	300 mL	granulated sugar
2 tsp.	10 mL	grated lemon zest
3 Tbsp.	45 mL	freshly squeezed lemon juice

### Optional cream cheese glaze:

¼ c.	60 mL	light cream cheese, softened
¼ c.	60 mL	butter, softened
½ tsp.	2 mL	vanilla extract
1 ½ c.	375 mL	icing sugar, sifted water or milk, if necessary

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Grease a 13 x 9 -inch (33 x 23-cm) metal baking pan; line bottom with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, combine almonds and carrots. Stir in bread crumbs, baking powder, ginger, nutmeg and cinnamon. Set aside.

In a large bowl, using an electric mixer on high speed, beat egg whites until stiff peaks form (do not overbeat). Set aside.

In another large bowl, using an electric mixer on high speed, beat egg yolks and sugar for 2 minutes or until thick and a ribbon trail forms when beater is lifted. Stir in lemon zest and lemon juice. Stir in carrot mixture until well blended. Gently fold in egg whites until fully incorporated.

Pour batter into prepared baking pan. Bake in preheated oven for 30 to 35 minutes or until a tester inserted in the centre comes out clean. Let cool completely in pan on a wire rack. Invert cake onto a large plate and remove parchment paper.

**Glaze:** In a medium bowl, using an electric mixer on high speed, beat cream cheese and butter until smooth. Beat in vanilla. Gradually add icing sugar, beating until smooth and of glaze consistency. If too thick, add ½ to 1 tsp. (2 to 5 mL) water or milk. Drizzle over cooled cake.

Per serving: 254 calories, 12.4 g fat, 3.2 g saturated fat, 108 mg sodium, 32 g carbohydrate, 2 g fibre, 6 g protein, 71 mg calcium, 1.2 mg iron. High in magnesium and vitamin A.

Recipe source: *Cook!* © 2011. Published by Robert Rose. Visit the Dietitians of Canada website at [www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health.aspx](http://www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health.aspx)

# Carrots: The “A-list” Vegetable

When it comes to nutrition-packed vegetables that taste great, are versatile and keep well, carrots top the “A” list.

One cup (250 mL) of raw carrots delivers 428% of the daily requirement for vitamin A – a key nutrient in night vision. Carrots are also rich in disease-fighting beta-carotene and contain almost 4 grams of fibre in a 50-calorie serving.

Like all fruits and vegetables, carrots lose nutritional value when exposed to air, heat, water and light. To preserve their nutrients, store carrots in the fridge. Enjoy them raw or cook them to tender crisp. Note: Some people find lightly cooked carrots easier to digest.

Fall is the ideal time of year to enjoy carrots fresh from the garden or local farmers’ markets. For raw eating, new carrots don’t even require peeling; simply rinse well and enjoy.

Eating carrots several times a week is a terrific health habit. Make eating raw carrots more fun for everyone by serving them in different formats. Try slicing them into long, skinny strips, cutting them with a crinkle slicer into “fries” or slicing them diagonally. They’re a great snack on their own or served with a low-fat dip. You can also grate them coarsely and add them to a salad, or serve them mixed with raisins.

Try sautéing carrots with garlic, lemon and fresh mint, or prepare them like mashed potatoes, seasoned with nutmeg or cumin. Add them liberally to soups and stews or bake them in the oven alongside a fresh chicken. Grated carrots are also fantastic when used in fall baking (see our recipe). In addition to fibre and flavour, they add texture and moisture.



## A Word on **White** Foods

For years, dietitians have encouraged us to eat a rainbow of richly coloured fruits and vegetables to ensure we get adequate amounts of disease-fighting nutrients. White, of course, is not a colour of the rainbow, and that's made "white foods" a popular nutrition target.

In this context, the offending white foods include refined carbohydrates like sugar, white flour and processed foods (made from white flour) like white bread, pasta, cookies, crackers and baked goods.

When a whole grain is refined, the process strips away almost all of its nutrients, leaving



behind little more than white starch. While carbohydrates are important in a healthy diet, refined carbohydrates contain little, if any, fibre and are often accompanied by added salt or sugar. It's easy to overeat these tasty but nutritionally empty foods, leading to weight gain and poor blood sugar control.

While white refined grain foods aren't good for you, not all white foods are bad. Milk, yogurt, low-fat cheese, onions, garlic, potatoes, cauliflower and oatmeal all deliver valuable nutrients.

Since no single food, group of foods or colour category supplies all of the nutrients needed for optimal health, variety remains the key to healthy eating. Eat a diet that includes all the food groups but emphasizes fibre-rich, high-quality foods in all colour groups.

## Protein and **Weight Loss**

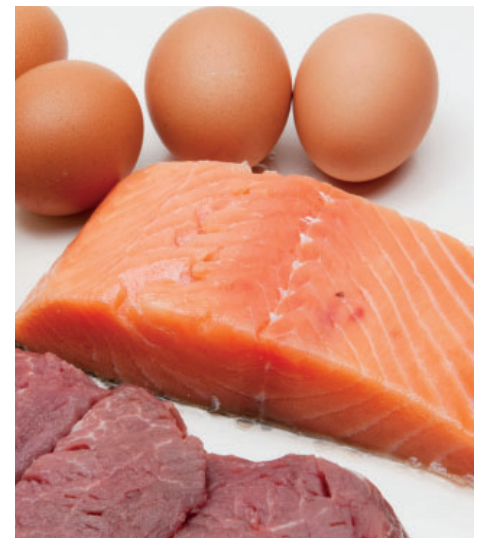
Twenty years ago, eating a no-fat diet to lose weight was all the rage; eight years ago it was cutting carbs. Today, protein is being touted as the next big thing in helping people to peel off unwanted pounds.

Protein (lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts and legumes) plays an important role in healthy weight loss in that it enhances satiety, making you less likely to overeat. It also slows the time it takes for the stomach to empty, which helps you to feel full longer – great for warding off diet-busting hunger pangs. **Tip:** To maximize this effect, include a little protein in *all* meals and snacks.

For good health and to feel full longer, eat three servings of lean protein each day. Single servings include:

- 3 oz./85 g lean meat, poultry or fish
- 2 Tbsp./30 mL peanut butter
- ¼ c./60 mL nuts or seeds
- ¾ c./175 mL legumes (naturally low-fat)
- 2 eggs
- half a can tuna (packed in water) or salmon.

To incorporate a little protein into snack choices, try 1 Tbsp./15 mL of peanut butter on celery or apple slices; ¼ c./60 mL of tuna salad on whole-grain crackers; or whole-grain cereal and low-fat milk sprinkled with 2 Tbsp./60 mL of chopped almonds.



## Foods That **"Move"** You

Much as we don't like to talk about it, optimal bowel function is a key to well-being. Ignoring bowel health can raise the risk of medical concerns that include constipation, diverticulitis, hemorrhoids and irritable bowel syndrome. These conditions can be painful, and can cause gas, bloating and diarrhea.

To ensure bowel health doesn't cramp your style, follow the "Three-F Approach" – fibre, fluids and fitness. Adult men require 38 g of fibre per day; women need 27 g.

To boost your fibre intake eat whole fruits and vegetables (with the skins when possible) instead of drinking juice. Choose whole-grain breads and pasta, and replace white rice with brown rice. Ten of the best sources of fibre are broccoli, apples, berries, green peas, sweet potatoes, lentils, almonds, quinoa, whole-grain bread and bran cereal.

When adding fibre-rich foods to your diet, do it slowly to help prevent any bloating or discomfort, and combine it with plenty of fluids. Staying well hydrated is vital to regularity.

The final key is fitness. Keeping active with consistent exercise also promotes regularity.



The first time I tried organic wheat bread, I thought I was chewing on roofing material.

Robin Williams (1951-) Actor and comedian

## Prescription Drug Abuse

**Drug abuse doesn't always involve illegal substances.** It can also take the form of overused or misused prescription drugs, with behaviours like hoarding prescriptions, the frequent "borrowing" of painkillers from a friend, or regularly sneaking pills from a parent's medicine cabinet. In fact, illegal use of prescriptions is particularly common among young people, who may falsely believe that prescription medication is safer to take recreationally than street drugs.

The most commonly abused prescription drugs include:

- **Opioids**, including pain-relievers such as Vicoden, Percocet or Oxycontin.
  - **Depressants** (or downers), including benzodiazepines such as Valium or Xanax.
  - **Stimulants** (or uppers), including Ritalin, Dexedrine and various amphetamines.
- Many of these medications are highly addictive.

Ongoing abuse can cause confusion, drowsiness or irritability, depression or agitation, impaired judgment, unsteady co-ordination, stroke, breathing problems and difficulties with withdrawal. They can also cause serious harm if taken with alcohol or in certain combinations.

If you think you or a loved one might be abusing prescription drugs, talk to your doctor. Signs of addiction include:

- Multiple prescriptions from different doctors, or frequently claiming to "lose" prescription slips.
- Acquiring medications through unofficial channels (e.g., friends or dealers), or by forging prescriptions.
- Taking more than is prescribed, or trying to hide how much you take.

Talk to your kids and family members about the importance of following prescription advice and the dangers of misuse. Keep track of what's in your medicine cabinet, and keep medications in a safe, secure area so they can't be stolen. Also, remember to take expired or unused drugs back to the pharmacy for safe disposal.



## Smile Brighteners

**Teeth are typically a soft shade of grey or yellow** – colours that can darken with age or with staining from food, beverages or smoking. Whitening toothpastes, chewing gum, whitening strips, gel trays and professional bleaching by a dentist are now making it possible to lighten tooth enamel for that coveted brighter, whiter smile.

Whitening toothpastes and chewing gums contain fine abrasives that help to temporarily remove surface stains from teeth, although the results may not be as dramatic as you might expect.

Over-the-counter teeth-whitening products applied to the teeth in strips or trays are peroxide-based and work by lightening the surface enamel of natural teeth (they will not work on caps, crowns, veneers, dentures and certain types of natural tooth discolouration). It's important to keep the peroxide solution away from gums to prevent gum irritation or the development of tooth sensitivity.

The advantage of having a dentist whiten your teeth is that dentists are able to use a stronger concentration of the bleaching agent, are able to protect the gums and other soft tissues in the mouth, and can use light, heat or laser treatment to enhance the effect.



Regardless of the method you choose, none of these procedures have a permanent effect, so expect the discolouration to reappear and the treatment to need repeating. Further, the long-term effects of teeth whitening have not yet been determined as these procedures are relatively new.

## Be a Better Friend

**After a hectic day at work**, it's easy to choose time on the couch over time with friends, but spending time with friends is vital to emotional and physical well-being. Having friends has been linked to better coping skills, lower rates of mental illness, better memory and better outcomes after illness. It's also connected to healthier habits, higher self-worth and lower levels of anxiety. Here are six healthy habits to help you be a better friend and earn you better friendships in return.

1. **Spend time.** Instead of picking up the TV remote, pick up the phone and connect with your friends.
2. **Be positive.** Your friends should always be able to offer a sympathetic ear, but be careful that you aren't constantly finding things to complain about.
3. **Listen.** Make sure you balance telling your own stories with lots of listening and asking questions.
4. **Show up.** Offer support by being there for parties, meet-ups or important events, but be there for the rough times, too, like attending a family funeral.
5. **Notice the good things and forgive the little bad ones.** Pay attention to your friends' best qualities, and don't focus on the tiny irritations.
6. **Laugh.** When you're with your friends, lighten up. Have a good laugh, safe in the knowledge that with each chuckle you are improving your health and theirs.

**A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out.**  
Walter Winchell (1897-1972) Newspaper columnist and radio commentator

## Diabetes Basics

**Diabetes is a chronic disease that affects millions of Canadians.** In fact, it's estimated that almost one-third of Canada's population either has diabetes or is at risk of developing diabetes. Even more alarming is the fact that new cases of diabetes are being added to these ranks at an unprecedented rate. So, what is diabetes?

When food is digested it causes glucose (a major source of fuel for the body) to enter the bloodstream. When this happens the pancreas releases insulin, the hormone needed to deliver the glucose from the blood to muscle, fat and liver cells, where it can be used as fuel. Diabetes occurs when the pancreas doesn't produce enough insulin (or any at all) or when the body can't use the insulin properly.

### Risk factors for developing diabetes:

Having an immediate family member with diabetes

Being overweight or obese

Giving birth to a baby who weighed more than 9 lbs./4 kg

Being physically inactive

Being of Aboriginal, Hispanic, Asian, South Asian or African descent.

### Key signs and symptoms of diabetes:

Excessive thirst

Frequent urination

Weight gain or loss

Extreme fatigue

Blurry vision

Frequent or recurring infections

Cuts or bruises that take a long time to heal

Tingling or numbness in the hands or feet

Difficulty getting or maintaining an erection.

### Left untreated or improperly managed, diabetes can lead to:

Heart disease and stroke

Kidney problems

Nerve damage

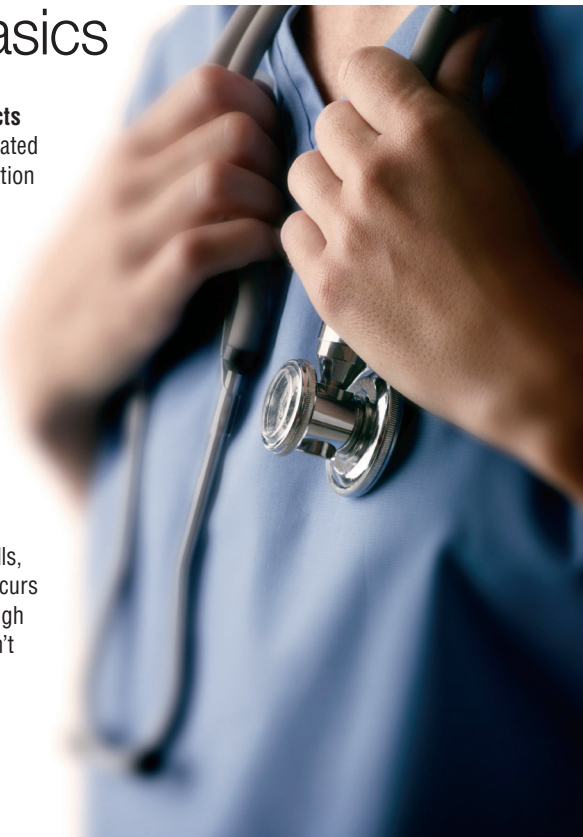
Eye disease or blindness

Amputation from peripheral vascular disease

Erectile dysfunction.

### To reduce your diabetes risk:

**Watch your weight.** Being overweight or obese dramatically increases the risk of developing diabetes.



**Butt out.** The risk of developing diabetic complications is much higher in smokers.

**Get physical.** Exercise causes the body to use up blood sugar and improves its response to insulin. It also helps lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels while helping with weight loss and the maintenance of a healthy weight.

**Eat a balanced diet.** Focus on eating whole, high-fibre, low-fat foods, including legumes, whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and lean meats and fish. Choose polyunsaturated fats found in salmon, nuts, flax or olive oil, and avoid processed foods. Choose foods with a lower glycemic index (GI); e.g., choose whole-grain bread over white bread. Foods low in GI carbohydrates produce smaller changes in blood glucose and insulin levels.

**Limit alcohol.** An average of one drink for women or two drinks for men per day is considered moderate consumption.

**Cut the caffeine.** There's evidence that caffeine increases blood glucose levels. If you love coffee, try switching to decaf.

**Learn to manage stress:** Stress may contribute to elevated blood pressure, which may increase risk factors in diabetics.

**Go for regular check-ups** (especially after age 40) with your doctor, dentist and eye specialist. Early detection often makes the problem easier to treat.

## Diabetes By the Numbers



**Type 1 diabetes** is usually diagnosed in children and adolescents but can be diagnosed in adulthood. It affects about 10% of people with diabetes and develops as a result of the pancreas' inability to produce insulin. People living with type 1 diabetes must test their blood-glucose levels throughout the day and require regular injections of insulin, which are self-administered through a syringe, pen or automatic pump. The cause of type 1 diabetes not known and the disease can't be prevented.

**Type 2 diabetes** (which affects 90% of people with diabetes) results when the pancreas doesn't make enough insulin or the body doesn't effectively use the insulin it does produce. Type 2 diabetes usually develops in adulthood, although increasing numbers of children in high-risk populations are being diagnosed with the disorder. People with type 2 diabetes can often maintain appropriate blood-glucose levels through healthy eating, physical activity and medication. However, the disease is progressive, and many people with type 2 diabetes must take medications and eventually may need insulin as well.

**Impaired glucose tolerance** refers to a condition where a person's blood-sugar levels are higher than normal but aren't high enough to be considered type 2 diabetes.

Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997) Missionary

## Tips on Finding Work-Life **Balance**

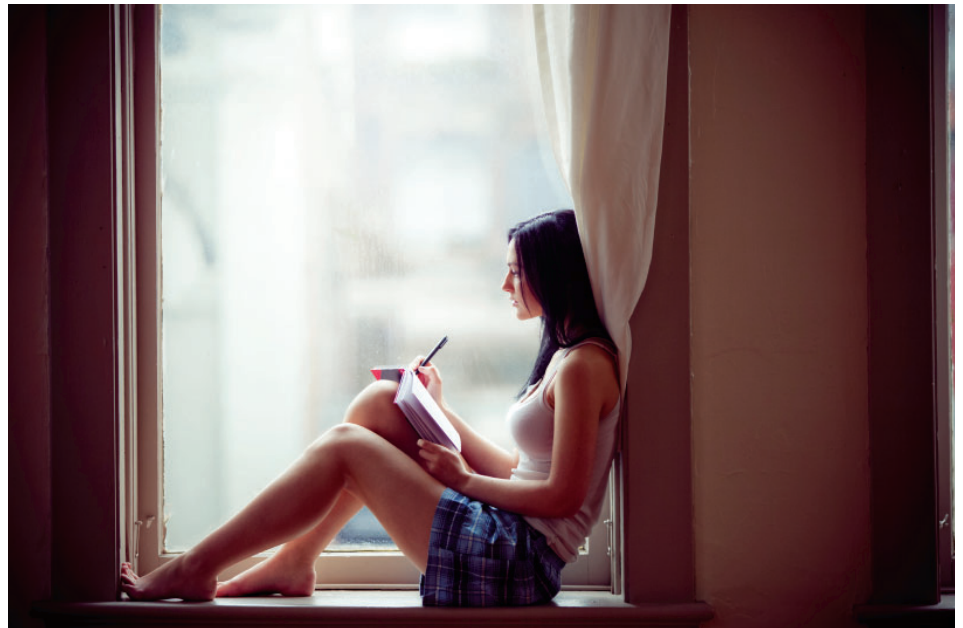
**Let's face it.** When you're trying to juggle a busy job with an active family, it's sometimes hard to keep all the balls in the air. Left unaddressed, a lack of work-life balance can lead to burnout, absenteeism and stress-related disability claims. So how do you achieve work-life balance? Here are five simple tips to start you on your way:

**Keep track of everything you do for one week.** Be extremely detailed so that you can identify areas where you could save time or be more efficient.

**Set your priorities.** Imagine yourself at the end of your life looking back and decide what you wish you had done more. Schedule important things like exercise, family time and date nights into your week, and honour those commitments.

**Leave work at work.** Cellphones and e-mail that keep us constantly connected to work have made it a lot harder to focus completely on family or relaxation. When you get home, turn off your cellphone.

**Simplify.** Focus on quality over quantity. Don't try to do it all. Choose what's truly important to you and do it well. It's a lot more satisfying.



**Look for helpful shortcuts.** Could you shop once a week for groceries or order groceries online and have them delivered? Can you afford a cleaning service or pay a neighbour's son or daughter to mow your lawn? Look for ways to lighten the load.

Re-balancing your work and life is a rewarding investment of time, but is not a one-shot deal. It is a continual process, especially as the demands of your job, your family situation and your personal priorities change.

## 5 Steps to **Safer** Sending



**A co-worker sends you a document created by another employee.** "It's full of mistakes," she says. "Can you salvage it?" The two of you exchange a few wry comments before you attach your revised version and send it on to your co-worker, who helpfully forwards it back

to the original author – and your department supervisor – forgetting about the ill-considered discussion thread still included below. Oops.

E-mail has sped up business communication to the point where it sometimes outpaces our ability to think. It seems everyone has a story about a forwarded or misaddressed e-mail, or even just one taken the wrong way. These gaffes usually result in some mild chagrin, but in the worst cases they can make your workplace feel toxic, or even harm your career.

To make sure your e-mails don't come back to bite you, follow this five-step checklist:

- 1. Carefully consider your wording.** E-mail lacks nuance and can easily be misread. Could that friendly comment be taken as being snarky? If the recipient forwards it on, could you be embarrassed?
- 2. Before forwarding anything, review the conversation chain** that has collected in the e-mail. Is there anything new readers shouldn't see? If in doubt, copy only the relevant text into a fresh e-mail.

**3. Review the address field carefully.** Did auto-fill add in Stevie from high school when you meant to send those salary charts to Steven in HR?

**4. Check the "cc" fields** to see if you are replying to only the sender or to everyone on the reply list. Use "reply all" only when absolutely necessary.

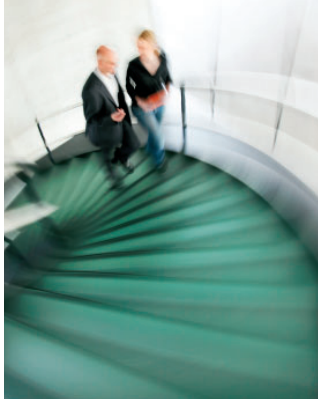
**5. Check attachments.** Are you sending your vacation photos instead of the promised design mock-ups? Does that Word document still include all of your less-than-complimentary editing comments?

It boils down to three Rs you should follow in all communication: review, reflect and reconsider. Consider also if you should even send an e-mail at all. If the conversation is one you wouldn't want to see public, or if you are handling a matter that requires delicate wording, a phone call or in-person meeting is likely the better choice.

While all aspects of our life are important, without a balance, you become addicted, and like all addictions, you lose.

Catherine Pulsifer (1957- ) Glass artist, author and quote maven

## Stairway to Better Health



**Step training is a great workout** for the heart and the muscles of the lower body. It's also an exercise you can do anywhere there are stairs, including at work.

While there are specially designed stepping benches that you can purchase, you can just as easily use the bottom step of any stairwell.

The standard height of a staircase step is about 7" (18 centimetres). If you're not very fit, or you've never step-trained before, start with the stair height of 7" (18 cm) or lower, if possible. Avoid using a height more than 12" (30 cm), or a height that causes your knee to flex less than 90 degrees.

Begin (and end) by standing two to three feet (60 to 90 cm) away from the step (depending on your height). Step up with your left foot, and then up with the right. Step down with the left, and follow with the right. Repeat at a steady, controlled pace. Keep a pace of about 118 to 120 steps per minute. To make the workout harder (and still keep it safe) try adding more arm movement or hold on to light dumbbells.

**Note:** If you have pain under or around the kneecap, stepping may not be a suitable exercise for you. Check with your doctor or a physiotherapist.

## Overcome Exercise Excuses



**Fall is a fantastic time to commit to get fit.** If you've been putting off getting regular exercise, confront your excuses and get moving:

**No time.** You need to *make time*. Schedule an appointment with yourself and don't break it. Ask a fitness professional for ideas. Tip: Exercise during commercial breaks on television.

**Interferes with work or studies.** Physical activity helps boost brain function. With clearer thinking and increased energy you'll actually be more productive.

**Family obligations interfere.** Get your family involved in activities like swimming, skating or hiking. Plan more active family get-togethers.

**Too tired.** Regular exercise increases energy levels. Improved blood circulation helps improve the delivery of oxygen to muscles and the brain leaving you feeling energized.

**Exercise is hard.** Find an easy activity like walking, and progress at a moderate pace.

**Bad weather is a deterrent.** Dress for the conditions or exercise indoors. Many activities can be done inside – like wall climbing, tennis and even golf.

**Exercise is boring.** Find a fun activity, or choose from several different activities to avoid boredom.

**No facilities or equipment.** You don't need a gym or equipment to exercise. Go for a hike or a brisk walk, or do calisthenics in your own home.

**Too expensive.** Walking is cheap. For weight-training exercises, use your own body weight or improvised equipment, like soup cans.

**Fear of injury.** Choose an activity with a low injury risk. To avoid injury, learn proper technique from a personal trainer or specific sports instructor.

**Lack of motivation.** Exercise with a friend and choose activities you enjoy, or hire a personal trainer to inspire you.

**Health problems.** Everyone can do some kind of activity. Ask your doctor and work with a fitness professional or physical therapist. Gentle exercise is healing!

## Desk Exercise – The Legs



**There are many convenient leg exercises that can be done even at your desk at work.** Try this:

Sit upright on a chair and cross your legs at the ankle. Breathe normally. Push forward with the rear leg and backward with the front leg. Hold for 3 to 5 seconds as you try to generate tension in the muscles by pushing in each direction. Switch the way your legs are crossed to reverse the direction of tension. Repeat the exercise 10 times for each position. It's a simple way to get the blood circulating and relieve tension.

**Exercise is done against one's wishes and maintained only because the alternative is worse.**

George Sheehan (1918-1993) Physician, author and runner

## Are **Moulds** on Food Dangerous?

**You're in a rush for breakfast and your last piece of bread has a spot of mould on it.** If you're like a lot of folks, you might consider removing the mouldy spot and eating the bread anyway, but you need to know that moulds can be a hazard to your health.

Moulds are microscopic fungi that live on plant or animal matter. They grow from tiny spores that are transported by air, water or insects, and their growth is encouraged by warm or humid conditions. When these spores end up on a piece of damp food, they grow into moulds that produce chemicals that break down the food and make it rot.

Moulds typically consist of three parts:

- **Root threads that invade the food they live on;**
- **A stalk that rises above the food;**
- **Spores that grow at the end of the stalk.**

Under the right conditions, some moulds produce poisonous substances (mycotoxins) that can trigger allergic reactions, respiratory problems

and even more serious illness. The only part of the mould you see is on the surface of the food. However, where there is heavy mould growth, root threads have usually invaded deeper and toxins may have spread throughout the food.

To avoid mould contamination of foods:

- **Always cover food when you want it to stay moist.**
- **Empty open tins of perishable food into clean containers.**
- **Put perishables in the refrigerator as soon as possible, and use leftovers within two to three days.**
- **Clean the inside of your refrigerator at least once a month.**
- **Check best-before dates and examine food carefully before you buy it.**

If you find food with mould on it:

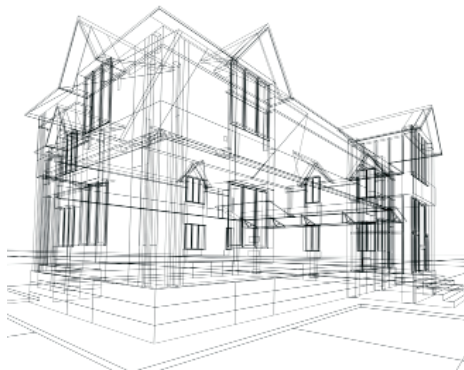
- **Avoid sniffing the food as the mould could cause respiratory trouble.**



- **If the food is covered with mould, wrap it thoroughly to prevent mould spores from spreading to other foods and discard it.**
- **Clean the area where the food was stored and check other foods around it.**

It's been suggested that **firm fruits and vegetables** and **hard cheeses** with a small mould spot can be eaten if you cut away an area one-inch (2.5-cm) around and deep. However, no matter how small the visible spot, mould can penetrate deep into foods, so the very best advice remains "if in doubt, throw it out."

## Hidden Hazards – Radon Gas



**You can't see it, smell it or taste it,** but radon gas is very real. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas produced in the ground through the normal decay of uranium, and it is found in soil, rocks and groundwater all over the world.

Small amounts of radon gas in the open air don't pose a health risk. However, higher concentrations of radon gas that develop in confined spaces can pose a health hazard. Health Canada reports that exposure to high levels of radon gas has been linked to an increased risk of lung cancer, and the higher the level and the longer you are exposed, the greater the risk.

Radon can enter your home through holes and cracks in the foundation, through plumbing, windows or well water. When radon gas mixes with outside air, its concentration becomes safe. However, it can become trapped in your home

reaching dangerous levels, especially in a basement without proper ventilation.

In Canada, the concentration of radon gas is measured in becquerels per cubic metre (Bq/m<sup>3</sup>). Health Canada guidelines stipulate that if radon gas levels in your home exceed 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>, remedial measures should be taken (e.g., sealing openings in walls and floors and around pipes and drains, improving air exchange in the basement by using fans, renovating basement floors (especially earth floors), or ventilating basement sub-floors.)

Testing for radon gas levels in your home is something you can do yourself. Test kits are available at most hardware stores, or you can hire a professional to do it for you. For more information visit <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/environ/radon-eng.php>

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