

healthmatters

Spring 2014

Saving the Earth, One Action at a Time

SHOW YOUR COMMITMENT TO A BETTER PLANET, starting at home. These easy changes help keep earth safe for you and your family.

Green Plants, Clean Air. Houseplants help brighten up a home, but did you know they also act as an air filter? Some plants can remove toxins such as formaldehyde, carbon monoxide and benzene from the air. Each plant can filter about 12 square feet. Beneficial plants include aloe vera, elephant ears, philodendrons, English ivy and ficuses, according to a NASA study.

Be Bright About Fluorescent Light Bulbs. Energy-efficient light bulbs, such as fluorescents, use 75 percent less energy and last up to 10 times longer than traditional bulbs. But because fluorescent bulbs contain small amounts of mercury, they shouldn't be treated like ordinary bulbs. If they are tossed in the trash, liquid mercury from broken bulbs can leak into the soil and air, contaminating the foods we eat. To dispose of your fluorescent bulbs, contact your local environmental agency or waste collector.

Keeping It Clean. Given the range of chemicals in use today, you can't avoid all of them. But you can take some precautions to protect yourself. Consider:

- Properly dispose of pharmaceuticals, household chemicals, paints, and other materials to limit water and soil contamination.
- Reduce or end use of gardening pesticides and fertilizers.
- Eat free-range meat to avoid exposure to antibiotics, growth hormones, and toxic run-off from livestock feed lots.

Clear the air. Help reduce air pollution.

When you drive, go easy on the gas. Stick to the speed limit, get regular engine tune-ups, and combine errands. Limit your driving when possible. Try carpooling, cycling, or public transportation.



Earth Day

Get involved! Visit www.greenrock.org/earthday and www.bnt.bm for events and activities planned for April 22.

What Organic Food Really Means

AS MORE PEOPLE BUY ORGANIC FOOD, YOU MAY BE WONDERING: Is it really healthier and more nutritious? What does the organic label mean? Is it better for the environment?

Organic farmers protect the air, water, and soil by avoiding the harmful pesticides and synthetic fertilizers conventional farmers rely on. Chemical fertilizer contributes to the loss of topsoil and micronutrients in healthy soil. Organic farming is also healthier for birds and animals, as well as the workers who pick the crops.

To get the most bang for your buck, focus on foods that are worth a bit extra. For instance: All conventionally grown produce has traces of pesticides, but some has more than others. The Environmental Working Group says you can substantially lower your pesticide exposure by going organic when you buy the so-called “dirty

dozen.” That includes apples, celery, strawberries, peaches, spinach, imported nectarines, imported grapes, sweet bell peppers, potatoes, domestic blueberries, lettuce, and kale/collard greens.

You’ll find the least pesticide in certain conventionally grown fruits and vegetables: onions, sweet corn, pineapples, avocado, asparagus, sweet peas, mangoes, eggplant, domestic cantaloupe, kiwi, cabbage, watermelon, sweet potatoes, grapefruit, and mushrooms.

There is no independent agency to certify foods “organic” in Bermuda. There are, however, local farmers who follow organic farming principles. If you’re buying from a farmers market, you are likely buying fresh, pesticide free, locally grown produce as well as encouraging the growth of clean foods in Bermuda.

There are three organic labels:

100% Organic
Use of the USDA Organic Seal is optional

Organic
Use of the USDA Organic Seal is optional

Made with Organic Ingredients
Use of the USDA Organic Seal is optional



health hint

Good to Know!



Enjoy lots of blackberries, blueberries, cranberries, raspberries, and strawberries—fruit that are especially high in antioxidants. They may help prevent cancer, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer’s disease, and macular degeneration.

See your doctor to check for hearing loss if you have difficulty hearing over the phone, get confused about where sounds are coming from, or you often misunderstand what others are saying.



A study in Chest found adults who drank one or more sodas daily greatly boosted their risk of suffering heartburn during sleep, due to the high acid content of carbonated drinks.

Increase your motivation to work out by giving yourself credit for every step you take toward reaching your fitness goals, instead of beating yourself up for all the steps you didn’t take.

Need help remembering to take your medicines?



Try leaving a note on your medicine cabinet or fridge. Or set your watch or cell phone to buzz when it’s time.



health hint

Why Wheeze?

So many people with asthma seem to think that wheezing is a part of life. Some people have wheezed and coughed for so many years they have become used to the way they feel and do nothing about it.

The good news is that no one needs to wheeze! Asthma is entirely treatable—medications to control asthma symptoms are safe and effective. However, you need to know how and when to take them. You also need to know how to control your triggers—little things make a big difference.

Controller inhalers (usually orange, brown, red or purple) need to be taken every day to keep your asthma away. Their effect builds up over weeks and you cannot simply start taking

them when your asthma gets worse. It would be a bit like brushing your teeth only when you get a toothache! Prevention is the key.

If you need to use your rescue or reliever inhalers—(usually blue) more than twice a week or refill the inhaler more than twice a year, your asthma is not in control.

i Talk to your doctor and have a consultation with an asthma nurse. Call the Asthma Education Centre at **239-1652** or Open Airways at **232-0264**. An hour of your life might change your life... it may even save your life!

How Much Do You Know About Alcohol's Health Effects?

ANYONE WHO HAS HAD A HANGOVER or experienced difficulty walking, speaking, or remembering things after a few drinks knows that alcohol can affect the mind and body. Even so, you may not know the seriousness of alcohol's long-term impact.

To assess how well you recognize the health effects of alcohol, decide if the following statements are true or false, then check your answers. Take steps to increase your knowledge as needed.



- Alcohol's effects on the brain end when you stop drinking.
 True False
- Alcohol affects everyone who drinks in the same way.
 True False
- Even small amounts of alcohol can impair your ability to drive.
 True False
- Alcohol consumption increases the risk you will become violent toward your spouse or children.
 True False
- Liver cancer is the only type of cancer associated with alcohol.
 True False
- Alcohol abuse can increase your blood pressure.
 True False
- Women are more susceptible to the long-term health effects of alcohol.
 True False
- Women who drink while pregnant have an increased risk of having a baby with birth defects or mental retardation.
 True False

- Binge drinking increases a woman's risk of being sexually assaulted.
 True False
- Men who have one to two drinks a day and women who have one drink a day may have a reduced risk for heart disease.
 True False

Answers

- False**—mental impairment due to long-term alcohol consumption can affect you long after you stop drinking.
- False**—alcohol's effects depend on how old you are when you start drinking, your gender, how much and how often you drink, and your family history of alcoholism.
- True.** **4. True.** **5. False**—it has also been linked with mouth, throat, esophagus, breast, and colon cancers. **6. True.** **7. True.** **8. True.** **9. True**—research shows an increased risk for rape when the victim, the attacker, or both have been drinking. **10. True**—this benefit must be balanced with the potential risks posed by alcohol consumption.

health hint

Q&A



Q: Are flip-flops ok to wear all summer?

A: While they may look adorable, flip-flops offer minimal support for the 26 bones of the feet, which may increase your risk for sprains, breaks, or ligament injuries.

You need to ditch the flimsy footwear and switch to more sturdy, athletic shoes when:

- Walking long distances
- Playing sports
- Gardening or mowing the lawn

Sturdy flip-flops are appropriate when you are at public pools, locker rooms, beaches, or hotel rooms because going barefoot in these settings increases your risk of contracting infections, such as athlete's foot or plantar warts.

When purchasing flip-flops, choose those that:

- Have some support (if you can bend them in half, they are not supportive)
- Are made of soft leather (to minimize blisters)



Make a Plan with Wellness Matters!

Plot your healthcare strategy with BF&M's free one-stop portal exclusively for health insurance members, Wellness Matters! Start with www.bfm.bm and click links to:

- Gain insight with "Interactive Tools."
- Take a Health Risk Assessment.
- Search the Drug Reference Guide.
- Test your breast cancer knowledge.
- Get breaking health news in one place.
- Analyse your understanding of stress.
- Benefit from tips on physical fitness.
- Reduce risk for cardiovascular disease.
- Get proactive against diabetes.
- Start cooking with healthy recipes.

Protecting Your Child from Sun Damage

SOME SUNSHINE IS GOOD FOR CHILDREN. Sun exposure is an important source of vitamin D, which helps strengthen bones. However, researchers suggest that 5 to 30 minutes of sun at least twice a week is usually enough to meet the vitamin D needs of most people.

Sun protection should begin when your children are infants. Harmful UV rays can penetrate clouds, causing sunburn today, and wrinkles, age spots, and skin cancer years later. Parents should have their children stay out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when it is the strongest. And be sure your children are protected even on cloudy days.

One of the best ways to protect your children is to dress them in a hat with a brim and light-colored, tightly woven clothes. Experts recommend lightweight long sleeves and long pants.

Children and babies should wear sunglasses even if they are in the sun for a short time. Buy sunglasses that say "blocks 99% of UV rays" or "UV absorption to 400 nm."

You should apply liberally sunscreen rated at least 15 SPF on your children 30 minutes before they go outside. Choose a waterproof sunscreen, and reapply every two hours. It's best to keep babies younger than 6 months out of the sun completely or shade their carriage or stroller with an umbrella. If you need to use sunscreen, apply a small amount to their face and back of the hands. Apply carefully around the eyes, avoiding the eyelids.



Resources for Action

Is your interest spiked by a health topic? Start your journey with these resources or visit the "BF&M Resources Guide" section of our Online Wellness Centre at www.bfm.bm.

Bermuda Integrative Health Cooperative
82 South Shore Road
Warwick
236-0336
www.healthcoop.bm

Nutritional Services
67 Victoria Street
Hamilton HM 12
278-6468 or 278-6469

Transitions Counseling for Addicts, Alcoholics and Families
79 Front Street
Hamilton HM 12
292-2667

Open Airways
The Nurses Practice
Liz Boden, R.N.
232-0264
lizboden@logic.bm

www.bfm.bm

BF&M Overseas Healthcare Toll-Free Helpline


BF&M Medical Assistance is available 24/7 with our toll-free numbers:

- 1-888-674-1367 (from Bermuda)
- 1-877-236-2338 (from outside Bermuda)
- 1-519-251-5186 (from Bermuda collect calls)
- 1-519-251-5185 (from outside Bermuda: collect calls)

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BF&M Wellness Matters!

Online Wellness Centre
www.bfm.bm. Just click Wellness Matters

 Scan the image with your smartphone to meet us on Facebook for hot news, policy info, and events.



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