



# HEALTH

## Wise

### Help Yourself Help Others

November 10-24, 2008

This Thanksgiving Holiday we thought it might be good to give back a bit, and by doing so, enhance the wellness of both giver and receiver. We'd like you to consider participating in a food drive with a twist. The twist is that before you can give to others, you must move yourself! You can rake leaves, workout at the gym, or do anything else that gets you up and moving. You can sponsor yourself or have someone sponsor you. We are suggesting that for every hour you exercise you, or your sponsor, will have the pleasure of donating one food item to the drive!

The drive will begin on Nov. 10 and run until Nov. 24 at 5 p.m. All non-perishable food items will be collected at the Wellness Office in the Shirk Center weekdays from 9-4 p.m. and will be donated to Clare House for the holiday. We really hope you'll consider this opportunity to help yourself and help others at the same time.

### WELLNESS TIDBITS

**Activity classes** will not meet during the Thanksgiving holiday break, November 26-30. Classes will resume Monday, December 1.

*Have a wonderful holiday.*

## Coasting Through Winter Healthy

Cold and flu season has arrived. Sniffles, sneezes, sore throats and other undesirable symptoms have been making their presence known among those we live with, work with or just come into close proximity. How is it that some people get sick every time a virus "goes around," and others make it through the winter unscathed? Are there truly prevention tips that increase the odds of being in the unscathed group?

It appears there are. Certainly, the adage, "wash your hands regularly" would apply for minimizing prolonged exposure to germ-laden contact, however, germ exposure alone does not determine how healthy we are. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that daily habits related to lifestyle play a key role in helping to prevent illness.

Maintaining a healthy immune system is the primary way to help prevent repeated bouts of the common cold and the flu. Sarosh Motivala, Ph.D., assistant professor at UCLA Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology, state that our immune system is a very integrated process involving many body systems, along with our brains. Diet, sleep habits, exercise levels, and state of mind all influence how our immune cells work. Staying cold and flu free therefore requires not only using soap and water, but also paying attention to your overall state of wellness.

Here are some suggestions to strengthen your body's immune system for optimal health.

#### Learn to manage your stress

Stress is the body's reaction to a change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustment or response, and can be stimulated by external pressures or internal concerns. What feels stressful depends on a person's perception to a given circumstance. For example, a child going off to college is a source of

great joy for some parents, for others, one of great stress imagining how the child will fair in new surroundings.

Look for outlets that help you to cope with stressful situations and find things that promote relaxation. Consider practicing meditation, breathing exercises, guided imagery, listening to relaxing music, and participating in yoga or tai chi. These activities have all been shown to boost immunity and can improve quality of life.

Other ways to cope with stressful situations include seeking out friends, participating in support groups and cultivating other resources that feel supportive.

#### Increase the quality of your nutrition

Nutrient deficiency is a common cause of low immune function leaving you more vulnerable to illness. Eat plenty of fresh fruits such as, citrus, blueberries and raspberries, fresh vegetables, garlic, ginger, shitake mushrooms, whole grains, seeds, and nuts. Include protein-rich foods low in saturated fat, such as beans, and wild salmon. While this list is not exhaustive, many of the foods mentioned provide nutrients that will help bolster immunity.

#### 30 minutes a day may help keep the doctor away

Exercise can build your immune function. It doesn't have to be vigorous to benefit your health. In fact too much exercise can lower your immunity, so aim for a happy medium. Walking is always a great option for getting 30 minutes of activity in a day. The philosophy of the IWU Wellness program is to discover what really moves you. So try on yoga, tai chi, dancing, functional training, etc., and see if it fits; if it does your 30 minutes a day will be more enjoyable.

#### Get plenty of rest

Getting a regular amount of sleep is important to give your body a chance to

## COASTING THROUGH WINTER HEALTHY — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

restore and regenerate not only the proverbial “batteries” but to attend to all of the metabolic functions required by the body, such as regenerating old cells, getting rid of waste and repairing cell damage. Most of us need 8 hours of sleep a night, but the quality of that sleep matters just as much as the quantity. So, if you wake up feeling groggy or tired after 8 hours you may want to check with your doctor to unearth other problems that might be interfering with a good night’s rest.

### On the herbal front

There is no firm evidence that any herb will prevent a cold or the flu. However, there is some evidence that certain herbs can help to build immunity and combined with other lifestyle habits may assist with prevention. The herbs Echinacea and astragalus seem to exert broad-spectrum positive effects on immune function.

### What about that Flu shot?

Don’t believe the rumor that a flu shot can give you even a mild case of influenza. Neither the vaccine nor the nasal spray contains a form of the flu virus that can give you the flu. The injected form of the vaccine is made from particles of dead flu virus cells, and the nasal spray contains live viruses that have been damaged so they can’t cause a major infection.

The flu virus is constantly changing and evolving into new strains, so it is recommended that people get revaccinated each year. The Center for Disease Control attempts to predict which flu strain will be predominant in a given year and then works with vaccine manufacturers to produce the specific vaccine that will combat the predicted strain.

In general, anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting the flu can get vaccinated. However, it is recommended that certain people should get vaccinated each year. They are either people who are at high risk of having serious flu complications or people who live with or care for those at high risk for serious complications. If you’re uncertain if you would benefit from a flu vaccination, contact your health-care provider or physician.

### Resources

*body & soul*, November, 2008

[http://dying.about.com/od/preventingdying/tp/six\\_lifestyle.htm](http://dying.about.com/od/preventingdying/tp/six_lifestyle.htm)

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>

## On-site Flu Shot Clinic

IWU will be sponsoring a flu shot clinic for Faculty, Staff, Retirees and Dependents on Wednesday, November 12 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Flu shots will be available in the Faculty/Staff Lounge (next to the Faculty/Staff Dining Room) in the Memorial Center.

As an employee participating in the IWU Health Plan, the cost of the flu shot will be processed through the plan at no cost to you. Your dependents, age 16 years and older, are also eligible for a flu shot. If dependents are covered by the IWU plan, there is no cost. If you or your dependents are not covered by the IWU plan, the cost is \$25 and is payable by cash or check at the time of the shot.

## NUTRITION BITES

Chili tastes great and can be good for you! It is chocked full of things like antioxidants and fiber. Browse the list of common ingredients and their benefits at the Wellness Web site, [www.iwu.edu/~wellness](http://www.iwu.edu/~wellness).

## Recipe of the Month



Wellness hosted the First Annual Chili Cook-off in October. Six delicious chili dishes were available for taste testing, all winners! Those in attendance had a chance to vote which chili they enjoyed most.

Congratulations to Dave King from the Physical Plant who prepared the winning chili. Dave says he never makes his chili the same way twice. So here is one version of many incarnations of Dave’s winning recipe.



## Dave King’s Venison Chili (2008 Winning Recipe)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 6 cloves garlic, minced                                  | 2 15oz. cans of red kidney beans, drained |
| 1 medium yellow onion, diced                             | 1 6oz. can of tomato paste                |
| 1 yellow bell pepper, diced                              | powdered cayenne pepper to taste          |
| 1 green bell pepper, diced                               | red pepper flakes to taste                |
| 3 lbs. ground venison                                    | ground black pepper to taste              |
| 1 28oz. can of whole stewed tomatoes, coarsely chopped   | chili powder to taste                     |
| 3 15oz. cans of diced stewed tomatoes with green chilies | ground sea salt to taste                  |
| 2 15oz. cans of black beans, drained                     |   |

- 1) In a large pot, sauté garlic, bell peppers and onion for 5 minutes.
- 2) Add venison, salt, and black pepper and cook until venison is no longer pink.
- 3) Drain pot.
- 4) Add all other ingredients to pot and simmer for 1 1/2 hours stirring occasionally.
- 5) Put in fridge for 1-2 days
- 6) Reheat in crock pot on low for several hours



## THE SAFER PATH

# Not-So-Sweet Cupboard of Corn

By Laurine Brown PhD

### Where Does All the Corn Go?

It's harvest time. Acres of Midwest cornfields are being sheared by tractors and shaken of their golden kernels. I remember thinking as a kid visiting our Iowa farmer relatives "Where does all this corn go?" Corn on the cob didn't take up *that* much space in the grocery store. I shrugged it off. Then, one day as a college student new to Illinois I learned it really wasn't sweet corn. I picked (yes, stole) corn from a field, and tried to cook it in the dorm with my partner-in-crime roommates, only to find it was not even edible. Ugh, field corn. Regardless, "Where does all this corn go?"

Renowned author Michael Pollan has spent time tracking corn kernels and offers insights. Since the 1980's our American plate has become "cornified" with mostly invisible corn that's been processed or passed through animals before reaching us. When you eat burgers, pork chops, chicken nuggets, yogurt, or drink milk *you're eating corn*, since most animals we eat or siphon milk from are cornfed today. When nibbling Cheerios, Wheat Thins, pretzels, or drinking Coke or Gatorade, *you're eating corn* (corn starch, corn oil, high-fructose corn syrup). One wonders if there's anything in the cupboard that isn't cornified.

Scientists can easily detect field corn "fingerprints" in Americans' bodies through carbon testing. A simple snip of hair or flesh reveals our heavy body burden of *carbon-13*, traced to eating corn (or things that eat corn). It's often said, "You are what you eat." We may think we're "wheat people" but our bodies say we're mostly "cornies—" even more than Mexicans, whose staple is corn (e.g., corn tortillas).

### Why Be Concerned About Our Corny Appetite?

Growing and eating so much corn takes a toll on our health and the environment. Take sugar. Nobody thinks of sugar when they see cornfields. Until the 1970s most sugar we ate was sucrose from sugar cane or beets. When federal farm subsidies helped make corn cheaper, corn sweeteners gained popularity, like *corn syrup* and especially *high fructose corn syrup (HFCS)*. HFCS is made in a complicated process, which converts cornstarch to a clear syrup high in *fructose*. With cheap corn sweeteners, soft drinks were super-sized and thousands of new sweetened snacks hit the market. Between 1970 and 1990, HFCS consumption increased over 1000%! USDA suggests we limit to 10-12 teaspoons of added sugar daily, but in 2005 we ate (mostly drank) 30 teaspoons daily with 40% from HFCS.

While the problem is complex, it's an interesting coincidence that the switch to corn sweeteners mirrors the rise in obesity and Type 2 diabetes. The 100-300 extra-sweetened calories that have snuck in do not help our waistlines, but research suggests HFCS metabolism is also problematic. While glucose can be processed in many body cells, fructose heads straight to the liver. Fructose in HFCS is absorbed quickly, flooding the liver with a "Katrina effect," raising blood triglycerides, worsening blood sugar control, and eventually causing a fatty liver. Fructose surges (especially sweet drinks) can cause digestive problems too, like irritable bowel syndrome. Additionally, fructose fails to stimulate appetite and weight-regulating hormones *insulin* and *leptin*, which may lead to overeating and weight gain. (Note: fruit also contains fructose, but the fiber

slows its metabolism.)

Our appetite for meat drives corn production. Over half the annual 10 billion bushels are fed to animals we eat (cows, chickens, pigs), regardless of whether it is good for them. Corn is cheap and fattening. With beef cattle, who's natural food source is grass, corn-feeding can cause gassy cows who need puncturing, damaged livers or heartburn from acid reflux requiring antibiotics, and even food safety threats, like E coli 0157 linked to acidification of the cow's stomach. Cornfeeding also makes beef lower in "good fats" like omega 3s and higher in saturated fat, a risk for heart disease.

Finally, environmental impact of growing 80 million acres of corn to feed our appetites for meat and sweets (and recently cars with ethanol) are considerable. Corn monocropping guzzles oil (for tractors, transport, chemicals), squeezes out native species, and pollutes drinking water and our bodies with run off from fertilizers and pesticides. All this matters to our health.

### Diversifying Your Not-So-Sweet Corny Cupboard

- **Drink water and less soda or sweetened drinks** to avoid "mainlining" sugars like fructose. Don't let sweetened drinks replace milk, especially for children who need bone building nutrients during growth. If you crave fizz, drink carbonated waters like Europeans. Choose fresh fruit over fruit-flavored drinks or even fruit juice which is still high in sugar.
- **Avoid foods that contain "added sugar," including HFCS.** Read labels. Ingredients are listed in order of most weight (first) to least (last). *Other not-so-sweet sugars include:* sucrose, brown sugar, raw sugar, glucose (dextrose), fructose, maltose, lactose, honey, syrup, corn sweetener, molasses, and fruit juice concentrate. Choose fruit canned in its own juices instead of heavy syrup.
- **Better yet, avoid label reading by eating "real food" in its "original packaging."** Pollan says "real food" is what your great grandmother would recognize, often packaged in skins which are full of digestion-regulating fiber. It looks like how it came from earth and doesn't need a label. Like spinach, lentils, apples, almonds. Can you pick gummy bears or cola off trees? Got it? Shop the perimeter of the grocery store, or better yet, go to farmers markets where you won't find HFCS amidst the bounty of real foods.
- **Eat more plant foods, less meat** — *vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, seeds.* Besides being packed with good-for-you-nutrients, for every meatless meal you help lighten demand for corn. Try new *species* to add diversity and healthful nutrients. If you eat beef, look for grass fed. For chickens or eggs, choose organic, free range (preferably local).

**Lastly, simply eat less.** Okinawans, the longest-living people on earth, practice "*Hara Hachi Bu*" (*eat till you're 80% full.*) Take a deep breath. Give thanks for the bounty in your cupboard. And make each bite matter. Because it does.

Resources available at [www.iwu.edu/~wellness](http://www.iwu.edu/~wellness)



## HEALTH STUFF AND MORE

### Tips for the Healthy Housekeeper

Eco-friendly tools make household chores a breeze.

- Are you applying nontoxic cleaners using sponges that contain chemical disinfectants such as antibacterial triclosan or triclocarban, both registered pesticides? If the package says the sponges are “antibacterial” or “kill odors,” or if they have a chemical smell, they probably contain a disinfectant. Instead, buy pure cellulose sponges, usually available at your grocery store (if not, check a hardware store).
- Use washable cloths and rags instead of disposable paper towels. If you do buy paper towels or other paper goods, choose those that aren’t chlorine bleached and that have a high percentage of recycled content.
- Rather than using abrasive, corrosive chemicals for scrubbing, use nontoxic soap. Give your elbow grease a boost with steel wool or dry salt.
- Open windows while you’re cleaning so cross-breezes can exhaust fumes to the outdoors. Even natural products — such as citrus or pine cleaners — can emit irritating fumes.

Source:

*Natural Home*, July/August, 2007



### On-Site Digital Mammography

Wednesday, December 10, 2008

A routine exam by a health professional, plus monthly self-exams and mammograms at the appropriate intervals for your age, are good ways to check the health of your breasts and to detect problems early. The earlier a problem is detected, the more easily and successfully it can be treated.

Women’s Health at Methodist Medical Center offers an invaluable service, On-Site Digital Mammography. They have come to the Illinois Wesleyan Campus for over a decade offering a convenient screening program and this year will offer digital technology.

The service includes the screening and radiology report, which is then sent to your personal physician for evaluation.

**A physician’s referral is required to participate in this service if you are under the age of 40.**

This service is covered under the IWU Health Plan, if you are a participant there is no charge.

**For more information, or to make an appointment, please call Wellness at 556-3334.**

**Appointments will be made from  
8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**