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## **August 2004 News Tips**

### **Fight obesity, build brainpower: Make those back-to-school lunches healthy**

Back to school means back-to-school lunches – which means more than chips and a candy bar.

With childhood obesity rates on the rise, parents need to be conscientious about steering their kids toward healthy eating habits, says Lona Sandon, a registered dietitian and assistant professor of clinical nutrition at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas.

Ms. Sandon recommends lunches that include such items as small containers of cottage cheese, fruit cups, puddings made with skim milk, single-serving packages of pre-cut carrots or celery with dip, and yogurt in a tube.

A classic sandwich – made from whole-grain, whole-wheat bread with lean meat and low-fat cheese or peanut butter – provides protein and other nutritional benefits. Yogurt smoothies can be substituted for soft drinks, wheat crackers for potato chips. And, of course, fresh fruits and veggies are still among the best options.

“A healthy lunch not only keeps the body going but also the brain,” says Ms. Sandon. “Kids who eat regular healthy meals often do better in school.”

She adds:

“If your kids insist on chips and candy, go with the baked chips rather than the regular and fun-size candy bars instead of king-size.”

*Media Contact: Donna Steph Hansard*

### **Some simple steps can help you maintain healthy kidneys**

Take care of your kidneys, and they'll take care of you.

Your kidneys regulate water in the body, remove wastes and control minerals like sodium, potassium, calcium and phosphate. They also produce hormones that help with various body functions, including blood pressure, red blood cell production and calcium uptake from the intestines.

“Kidneys are essential for life,” says Dr. Robert Toto, kidney specialist and director of clinical nephrology and patient-oriented research in nephrology at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. “They regulate blood pressure, fluid and electrolytes from minute to minute.”

Fortunately, a few basic steps can help maintain healthy kidneys.

Have your blood pressure checked regularly, don’t smoke, maintain the proper body weight by eating a healthy and balanced diet, exercise consistently, and get sufficient rest. Nonprescription drugs and herbal remedies can damage the kidneys, so consult your physician about their use.

Up to 20 million Americans have some degree of kidney disease, most likely related to hypertension and diabetes, Dr. Toto says. Kidney function can be estimated through a simple blood test and a urine test for protein. An elevated amount of the protein albumin in the urine can be a sign of lurking chronic kidney disease, requiring further tests and/or treatment.

*Media Contact: Scott Maier*

## **Score one for hydration when school sports begin**

For many kids, back to school means back to sports. During the time off, many young athletes tend to forget the importance of drinking plenty of fluids during hot, long practices, says Dr. Luis Palacios, assistant professor of family practice and community medicine with expertise in sports medicine at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas.

He recommends sport participants drink 4 to 8 ounces of water every 15 to 20 minutes if they have been working out for an hour or less, including warm-up sessions. For workouts longer than an hour, athletes should reach for the sports drinks to replenish carbohydrates and electrolytes such as sodium and potassium that are lost through sweating.

“Hydration is very important because heat stress and heat stroke are such a concern among physicians caring for athletes,” Dr. Palacios says. “Besides, dehydration impairs performance.”

*Media Contact: Staishy Bostick Siem*

## **TV makeovers may seem glamorous but cosmetic surgery carries risks**

Americans – 1.3 million men and women a year – are lining up for facelifts, tummy tucks, breast

augmentation, nose reshaping and other body-enhancing cosmetic procedures – spurred by the recent glut of television makeover shows glamorizing such operations.

But are the shows dishing up more “reality” than realistically can be delivered?

Often so, says Dr. Rod Rohrich, chairman of plastic surgery at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. People interested in elective plastic surgery need to remember that cosmetic surgery is an invasive procedure and carries the same risks as any other surgery. They also should realize that the illusion of numerous procedures done in one visit is just that: TV drama.

“Do your homework. Select a cosmetic surgeon certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery,” says Dr. Rohrich, president of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. “Women spend more time shopping for shoes than they do their plastic surgeon. You can always take the shoes back, but you can’t take your face or your life back.”

*Media Contact: Donna Steph Hansard*

## **Epilepsy seizures best controlled by following doctor’s orders**

For most of the 2.5 million Americans with active epilepsy, the most common seizure trigger is not flashing lights, noise or other stimuli, according to a neurologist at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. Rather, it’s not following directions.

“Medication helps about 70 percent of epilepsy patients control seizures, but they have to take it properly,” says Dr. Paul Van Ness, associate professor of neurology and director of the UT Southwestern Epilepsy Center. That means taking the right dosage at the prescribed time. Dr. Van Ness adds that some patients do not take medication as prescribed because of side effects, costs or inconvenient regimens, so they need to discuss these issues with their physician.

Epilepsy can develop at any time in life, but especially in early childhood and old age. It is caused by a sudden change in electrical signals in the brain.

*Media Contact: Amanda Siegfried*

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