



May 2010

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Know Your Numbers

May is National High Blood Pressure Awareness and Prevention Month, so what better time to get your blood pressure checked and know your numbers!

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, occurs when your resting blood pressure is consistently measured at 140/90 or greater. The higher number – your systolic pressure – indicates when the heart beats, and the lower number – your diastolic pressure – is when the heart is at rest. The goal is to keep your blood pressure below this level – or below 130/80 if you are diabetic or have chronic kidney disease.

Because there are no symptoms of high blood pressure, it is often referred to as a silent killer. When left untreated, high blood pressure can cause heart failure, aneurysms, kidney failure or stroke. Talk to your doctor this month about how you can prevent or treat your high blood pressure.



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LIVE WELL, WORK WELL

Safe Biking Tips

If you're looking to hop on your bicycle and take it for the first ride of the season, now is a good time to dust it off and follow a few reminders to keep you safe.

Get your bicycle checked and serviced: If your bike has been sitting in the garage all winter, there's a good chance that it could use a tune-up. Visit a local bike shop and have them check it for you. Many bike shops offer spring servicing specials and can get your brakes, gears and tires in good working condition before you take your first ride.

Visit your doctor: If you haven't ridden your bike in a few years, it's a good idea to see your doctor to make sure your health status hasn't changed and that biking is still a safe form of exercise for you. In most cases your doctor will be supportive, but he/she may have some helpful tips.

Be prepared: If you don't already have a helmet, now is the time to get one. It can save your life in accident, and there are many styles to fit your individual biking needs. Make sure you're wearing proper clothing for riding, bring water and dress for the weather.

Practice safety: Before heading off on longer rides, consider riding around in a local park or empty parking lot. This will help you regain your confidence on your bike and consider safe riding techniques. Practice skills like checking for cars, making safe turns, using hand signals, changing gears and stopping suddenly. You will be a safer biker when riding among cars and pedestrians.

Know the rules of the road: There are many ways to avoid having an accident on your bike. When biking remember to:

- Ride with the flow of traffic
- Do not ride on the sidewalk
- Plan your routes to stay on trails, paved road shoulders and bike lanes
- Wear reflective gear
- Check behind and alongside you for turning traffic
- Look for cars turning left across your path
- Watch for gravel, trash or anything that may cause you to fall



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Financial Spring Cleaning

It's spring – time to assess, refresh and grow. But don't think this just applies to your garden. A little spring cleaning can help you grow your finances, too.

Treat your financial statements and bills like closets. Is there anything you're not using anymore? Could you reduce your cable package? Or eliminate your home phone? Consider what you're not "wearing" anymore, and think about what you could eliminate.

Get rid of winter bills with the season. Still have leftover holiday debt? Now is a good time to get rid of it. To do this, consider a one-time way to make money, such as a garage sale, selling online or volunteering for overtime at work.



Consider an automatic savings plan. Go to your bank's website and set up an automatic transfer from your checking to your savings each month. Already have an automatic savings plan? Set up one for something specific such as a weekend away or a remodeling project. Even if you can only contribute \$20 a month to your new account, it easily adds up.



100 Calories or Less!

Did you know that one snack-sized bag of potato chips has about the same number of calories as an apple *and* one cup of strawberries *and* one cup of carrots with low-calorie dip? When trying to lose weight, one of the most important points to consider is eating fewer calories than you did previously. But this doesn't mean that you necessarily have to eat less, just smarter. Filling up with healthier alternatives can satisfy your hunger while still monitoring your caloric intake.

Consider some of these healthier 100-calorie or less options, next time you're hungry for a snack.

- 2 cups raspberries
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 medium-sized apple
- 1 hard-boiled egg
- 6 oz. fat-free yogurt
- 1 handful roasted peanuts
- 1 stick string cheese
- 2 tbsp. hummus with ¼ cup fat-free pretzels
- 2/3 cup whole grain cereal with ¼ cup fat-free milk



Looking for a simple pasta dish? This colorful spring pasta salad will bring life to your next picnic or barbeque.

Greek Pasta

- 4 cups bowtie pasta, cooked and cooled
- 1 green pepper, diced
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 1 yellow pepper, diced
- ½ red onion, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp. chopped fresh herbs, any combination of cilantro, basil, rosemary or thyme
- 1 cup Greek vinaigrette dressing
- ¾ cup crumbled feta cheese

Combine all ingredients. Allow to marinate for at least one hour. Makes 4 servings. Add pitted black olives and/or sliced tomatoes for additional flavor.