



# Hands of Health Newsletter

September/October 2003

Hello, again!!!

How great would it be to have a massage in the comfort of your office? You don't have to drive anywhere, battle traffic, the heat (this time of year) and it's a short walk back to your desk! The solution: corporate chair massage!!! Most everyone has had at least one experience of getting onto a massage chair but if not it's simply a comfortable chair you sit face in with your face in the same kind of face cradle as a massage table except you are suspended off the ground with your lower legs resting on a couple of pads with your back straight and your arms resting out, folded, in front of you. It's as relaxing as a regular massage and usually lasts between 10-20 minutes. A typical visit from me is 15 minutes. My rates vary depending on the number of clients scheduled. For example, if 1-3 people schedule the rate would be \$20 per massage. The more appointments your office schedules, the lower the rates. So pass this on to the person who makes decisions regarding who has clearance to enter your office or if you can give permission call me to arrange a visit where I can demonstrate chair massage. The benefits are just like those of a full body massage; you feel relaxed, refreshed, renewed, are more productive, there's less absenteeism and better morale around the office. I have some great articles for your reading pleasure in this issue; informative, interesting, and timely. Enjoy and if ever you feel like giving me feedback please feel free to call me or bring it up when you come in for your full body massage.

## REPLACE YOUR HORMONE THERAPY

Many women who used hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to combat the symptoms of menopause stopped making these hormones after a large study last year showed that they increased a woman's risks for heart attack, breast cancer and stroke. Other women have remained loyal to the treatment, citing such benefits as better memory, mood and sleep. How effective really is HRT for treating these symptoms?

As part of the Women's health Initiative (WHI), over 16,000 women ages 50 to 79 were randomly selected to receive either estrogen plus progestin or a placebo (essentially a sugar pill); neither the researchers nor the participants were aware which each had been given. Measures of quality of life were recorded initially, one year later, and after three years (in a smaller subset of these women).

Estrogen and progestin pills did not provide any significant improvements

in the women's health in any quality-of-life area, including memory; sleep; sex life; depression; pain; energy levels; or emotional health. Hormone therapy was considered effective for treating hot flashes and night sweats only in 50- to 54-year-olds suffering these symptoms, however,

In another blow to HRT, this study from The New England Journal of Medicine shows that it does not appear to offer any meaningful effects to a woman's quality of life. Black cohosh and other herbs, as well as soy products, have shown some ability to safely fight menopausal symptoms, but there is still no consensus on their effectiveness. Despite the lack of many viable alternatives, hormone replacement therapy is not the way to go.

Haas J. Ockene JK, et al. Effects of estrogen plus progestin on health-related quality of life. The New England Journal of Medicine 2003;348(18), pp. 839-1854.

## DON'T BE A DROPOUT

When was the last time you exercised vigorously? For optimal health, you should be performing a strenuous workout, such as funning or lifting weights, several times each week. Based on a recent Gallup Poll, however, the odds are that most people aren't getting nearly enough exercise.

In November 2002, the Gallup Organization conducted a Health and Healthcare Poll of over 1,000 American adults to find out how many are vigorously exercising (i.e., at least 20 minutes of exercise that causes large increases in heart rate and breathing) or performing other forms of physical activity, and how often they're doing it. Gallup then compared the results to a similar phone survey it completed in November 2001.

The percentage of Americans who engage in vigorous exercise dropped from 50% in 2001 to 45% in 2002. Moderate exercise, or activities that cause a slight increase in heart rate (e.g., gardening or walking), has pretty much remained constant. Around 80% of people engage in weekly moderate exer-

cise, although the percentage of those who do also dropped slightly in the past year. At every frequency of exercise, there was evidence of a decline in participation, according to the poll. Also, only a quarter of Americans are weight training, despite numerous efforts by health professionals to encourage people to lift weights every week.

Based on Gallup's "overall exercise index," 54% of Americans are considered sedentary or having low activity levels. So, at the same time Americans are eating more food with higher fat content, they're also working out less and burning fewer calories. Don't be a dropout - if you used to exercise, start working out again. If you've never really worked out, there's never been a better time to start. There may be no better way to stay healthy.

Saad L. Fewer Americans feeling the burn: Dwindling number report vigorous exercise. Gallup News Service, Poll Analyses, Jan 10, 2003.

## SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE

Married couples share many common traits and habits - if one spouse smokes, the other often does; if one exercises, so does the other. Adult-onset diabetes is increasingly being shown to be based on lifestyle factors, rather than genetic ones. By examining married couples - people who are not genetically related but share many similar habits - an association between diabetes and its causes may be found.

A recent study in Diabetes Care determined the presence of adult-onset (type 2) diabetes and high blood sugar in the spouses of known diabetics attending a specialized clinic. The 245 spouses in this first group were then compared to 234 spouses of nondiabetic individuals.

People married to diabetics were more than twice as likely to have diabetes and glucose intolerance themselves than spouses of people without dia-

betes. Spouses of diabetics were also more likely to be obese or overweight and to have high blood pressure than the healthy individuals' spouses - both risk factors for the development of type 2 diabetes.

We've long known that if you have a parent or sibling with diabetes, you are at an increased risk for the condition. This study shows that lifestyle clearly has a significant influence on diabetes risk; the increased odds of sharing diabetes with a family member may be due more to similar habits than to genetics. To avoid developing type 2 diabetes, maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly, and keep your blood pressure and cholesterol levels in check - and make sure your significant other does the same.

Khan A. Lasker SS, Chowdhury TA. Are spouses of patients with type 2 diabetes at increased risk of developing diabetes? Diabetes Care 2003;26, pp. 710-712.

## A POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCE OF HIGH PROTEIN DIETS

In a world of countless diet fads and programs, perhaps none is as well-known as the "Atkins Diet," which severely limits carbohydrate consumption but allows for high levels of dietary protein and fats. The possible long-term side-effects of a high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet are still uncertain, although recent American Heart Association guidelines suggest that a long-term, high-protein diet may adversely affect kidney function.

To evaluate a possible association between dietary protein intake and functional decline of the kidneys over an 11-year period, researchers examined approximately 1,600 women ages 42-68. Protein intake was determined

twice over the study period using a food-frequency questionnaire; renal function was evaluated through measurements of kidney filtration ability. About 500 women displayed a slight but harmless weakened kidney function at the start of the study.

In women with mild kidney deficiency, high protein consumption was associated with a significant decline in kidney function over time; those who consumed the most protein showed the greatest functional decline. Intake of nondairy animal protein, in particular, was associated with accelerated renal continued on back.

## A POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCE OF HIGH PROTEIN DIETS - continued

decline in these women. High protein intake was not related to kidney function in women with normal initial kidney function.

Long-term, high-protein diets may have substantial negative side-effects on kidney function. Roughly one-fourth of all Americans are considered to display mild renal insufficiency; most of these individuals are unaware of this. Exercise caution when considering any fad diet or weight-loss remedy. If you

choose a high-protein, low-carb diet to lose weight, considering only adhering to it for a short time. A well-balanced diet combined with exercise is still the safest, most effective way to maintain long-term weight control.

Knight EL, Stampfer MJ, et al. The impact of protein intake on renal function decline in women with normal renal function or mild renal insufficiency. *Annals of Internal Medicine* 2003;138(6), pp. 460-467..

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Hope you enjoyed that. I'm always looking for information like this to pass on to you. In this day and age of our hyper-fast lifestyles we don't all have time to do the research so I want to make it easy for you. And for those who don't know, I'm training to run a marathon in January; one reason I included the article "Don't Be A Dropout". The training is very intense but it's doing wonders for my conditioning. I'm not saying everyone needs to get out and run one but I can never underemphasize the need to exercise for better health and quality of life. Then come in and get your massage.

Until next time,

Stay healthy, stay well,



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