

MOVE OF THE MONTH

Shovel safely

"Snow shovelling is often done in a hurry — say, if you're trying to clear the driveway to be on time for work," notes Kim Ott, a physiotherapist at Roseway Hospital in Shelburne, N.S. "And if you don't practise proper body mechanics and don't have the proper equipment, you risk causing injury to your back, neck and/or shoulders."

Check out these dos and don'ts.

Do choose the right shovel. Your shovel handle is the right length when you can bend your knees slightly and easily put the blade on the ground. Push-blades or scoops are even better.

Do warm up with a few stretches.

Do remember to tighten your stomach muscles, and keep your feet apart and your back straight. Bend at the waist, hips and knees as you shovel.

Don't go all out: shovel for five to seven minutes, then rest for two to three minutes.

Don't twist as you move the snow to the side.

Don't forget to cool down by slowing your pace, stretching your back and walking around to admire your handiwork.



NOT A BAND-AID SOLUTION

Even more than a better mousetrap, a better cold-sore medication has long been the object of man's desire. At the first telltale tingling on the lips or nose, try Doctor's Cold Sore Solution. Developed by Arizona-based surgeon Dr. Merrill Chernov as a topical painkiller for burn patients, the solution also contains virus-inhibiting components. It's designed to do four things: stop the tingling from growing into nasty liquid-laden lesions (if applied at the first sign), ease pain, help existing cold sores heal faster and prevent the blisters from spreading. This roll-on product can be used for canker sores, too. www.doctorscoldsore.com



Choose sex over smoking

Yet another reason not to smoke, guys: it hurts your sex life. A study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* found that smokers between the ages of 35 and 74 who were otherwise healthy (that is, no clinical blood vessel disease) were more likely to have erectile dysfunction (ED) than non-smokers. And their risk increased with the number of cigarettes they smoked in a day. Those who lit up 11 to 20 times daily had a 45% greater chance of suffering from ED. For more on the downside of tobacco use, see "Smoke-Free, Health-Full," p. 18.



TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH

Ask. Talk. Listen. That's the advice of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute (CPSI), an organization dedicated to helping both patients and health-care workers prevent potentially serious problems such as mix-ups in medications and transmission of infections. "If patients and their families are empowered and involved in their care, everyone is safer," notes Dr. Susan Brien, a CPSI representative. "Don't be reluctant to speak up." Keep these safety tips in mind.

ASK Write down questions before your medical appointment. Inquire about medication side effects and how to take a medication properly. Be clear on how to prepare for a medical test.

TALK Bring an up-to-date list of all your medications, including herbal supplements, to your appointment. Tell your health-care provider about conditions that run in your family. Remind all health-care providers to wash their hands before examining you.

LISTEN Pay attention to your health-care provider. If necessary, bring a friend or relative with you to help write down important information. Ask questions when you need clarification.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Controller medication is anti-inflammatory asthma medication that must be taken every day. It controls asthma by treating the chronic inflammation inside the airways with drugs such as corticosteroids and leukotriene receptor blockers. It should be used daily even if you are not experiencing asthma symptoms. It should not be used to treat acute, sudden symptoms — that's what bronchodilators (also known as rescue medications or puffers) are for.

MATCH 'EM UP

You know that milk is a great source of calcium and oranges are packed with vitamin C. But do you know where to find other important nutrients such as folate and vitamin D? To get the scoop, *Canadian Health* talked to Jenny Okroj, a registered dietitian with Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, and the region's dietetic intern, Bronwyn Bone. "Choose from a wide variety of foods," says Bone. "It's the best way to get a mix of nutrients and keep you interested in your diet, too."

Match up the food sources on the left with the nutritional components on the right.

- 1 Tuna
- 2 Supplement
- 3 Oatmeal
- 4 Raisins
- 5 Red pepper
- 6 Kidney beans



- Soluble fibre **A**
- Vitamin C **B**
- Iron **C**
- Niacin **D**
- Folate **E**
- Vitamin D **F**

1D Niacin (vitamin B₃) helps keep your nervous system and digestive system healthy.

2F Vitamin D may help lower the risk of breast, prostate and colorectal cancers. Your body produces vitamin D when your skin is exposed to the sun's ultraviolet B rays. Since sun can be hard to come by in the Canadian winter, and it's difficult to eat enough foods fortified with vitamin D, the Canadian Cancer Society now advises everyone to take a daily supplement of 1,000 IU of vitamin D during the fall and winter months.

3A Soluble fibre promotes bowel regularity and can help lower cholesterol levels and maintain healthy blood glucose levels.

4C Iron is crucial for the production of red blood cells.

5B Vitamin C is vital for healthy gums and teeth. It also helps your body to absorb iron.

6E Folate may help prevent heart disease. In moms-to-be, it decreases the risk of their babies having birth defects such as spina bifida and cleft palate.

ANSWERS

The Green House

We spend 90% of our time indoors, particularly in winter, and the air we breathe in our insulated homes can be downright scary. Take these steps to improve your indoor air quality (and maybe help the planet, too).

NIX THE BICS Absolutely no lighting up indoors.

BE HIGH MAINTENANCE Have your furnace, gas stove, fireplace and water heater checked and serviced once a year.

STOP YOUR ENGINES Don't idle your car, especially in a garage attached to your house or in the driveway. Exhaust pollutants can make their way into your home.

AVOID VAPOURS Particleboard and medium-density fibreboard can off-gas harsh chemicals. Whenever possible, choose furniture made of solid wood.



Meds in pregnancy

Should a depressed woman continue taking antidepressants during pregnancy? Probably yes, but more than half discontinue their drugs, according to a recent study of 97,680 Quebec moms-to-be. Although these women may be following their doctor's advice, fears about the adverse effects of antidepressants on the baby are often unfounded, the study's investigators say. "To the best of our knowledge, the most commonly used antidepressants — with the exception of paroxetine [Paxil] — are generally safe during pregnancy," notes Dr. Anick Bérard, study co-author and director of the Research Unit on Medications and Pregnancy at Ste-Justine Hospital Centre in Montreal. "But there is a huge risk to both the baby and the mother when maternal depression is not treated."



Smile!

Tried everything to banish gingivitis, a common inflammation of the gums? Ask your dentist about Periowave, a disinfecting low-intensity laser treatment that painlessly zaps bacteria living in the mouth and on and between the teeth. Go to www.periowave.com or call 604 669 0555 for more information.

BRAIN + FOOD

Scientists may have taken another step in understanding anorexia nervosa, an eating disorder characterized by an obsessive fear of gaining weight and severely limited food intake. Researchers from the University of Pittsburgh and the University of California at San Diego measured the brain activity of 16 recovered female anorexics and 16 women with normal eating patterns. Using magnetic resonance imaging, they found that the previously anorexic women had marked differences in the parts of the brain that recognize taste (the insula and related regions). The study authors hypothesize that anorexics may have difficulty recognizing taste and therefore trouble responding pleasurably to food.

FAST FACT

1%

In people with diabetes, the decrease in blood glucose level required to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke by 15% to 20%, and the risk of blindness, kidney failure and amputation by 25% to 37%.

You ask, we answer

SLEEP TIGHT AND... I've heard a lot recently about bedbugs in hotels. What should I look for, and are the bites dangerous?

These nocturnal, blood-sucking creepy-crawlies are reddish-brown in colour and have flat, oval bodies about the size of an apple seed. While they're usually found in the sheets (close to the host's body, where they like to nest), they can also be found deep in mattresses and box springs, behind headboards and in sofas. "Anywhere there's a frequent turnover of people, from hotels and hospitals to cruise ships and camps, you'll find bedbugs," says Michael Goldman, president of Purity Pest Control Limited in Concord, Ont.

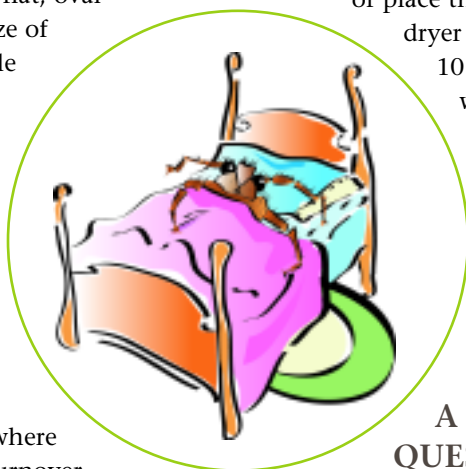
Bites can appear on skin exposed during sleep and are often written off by the victim as mosquito bites (they're red and super-itchy). According to research from Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital, even though bedbugs don't transmit infectious diseases, they cause discomfort and anxiety in the people they bite. "The main health issues are the itchy rash and the upsetting psychological impact of feeling that one's room is infested and unlivable," says Dr. Stephen Hwang, an associate professor in the University of Toronto's division of general internal medicine. To avoid bringing bed bugs home from hotels, pull the comforter or duvet off the bed, untuck the sheets and check the mattress when you arrive. Look for

live bugs or blood spots. Check behind the headboard and inside drawers before unpacking. If you spot any vermin, call the front desk and ask to change rooms right away. Use the luggage stand, not the floor, for your bags. When you get home, launder all clothes in your luggage or place them in a hot dryer for at least

10 minutes,

whether or not you've worn them, and store your suitcases in the garage.

— Lisa
van de Geyn



A KINKY QUESTION

I am a very fit 48-year-old woman who loves to play tennis. Lately, I get a painful kink in my neck whenever I serve. What can I do to alleviate this?

The type of pain you describe is often the result of a sideways combination movement involving both extension and flexion of the neck muscles and possibly rotation of the spinal column in the neck region as well, says Dr. Mireille Belzile, a sports-medicine specialist in Ste-Foy, Que. "In this position, the facet joints, which lie at the back of each vertebra and connect pairs of vertebrae, can become compressed and cause intense pain," she says. Furthermore, in this area the neural foramina — the openings through which nerves between the vertebrae exit the spinal column at various points — are smallest in diameter and can press on the nerves and

irritate them. It is also common to develop arthritis in the neck region after age 40. This condition can both exacerbate facet-joint pain and reduce the size of the neural openings. "A simple X-ray of the cervical column should give you a diagnosis. After that, hands-on physiotherapy to the neck area and a customized exercise program could help," she says. — Diana Swift

TARGET: 20 GRAMS

What can I eat in a day to keep saturated fat to the 20 grams or so I've seen recommended for women?

We admit that it's tough, even when we watch what we eat. Here are some reasonable choices that add up to 20.45 grams of saturated fat. For more on the saturated-fat content of different foods, check out the USDA Nutrient Database at www.ars.usda.gov/nutrientdata.

1 cup 1% milk	1.5 g
½ cup 2% yogourt	1.5 g
3.5 ounces firm tofu	1.25 g
3.5 ounces wild canned sockeye salmon	2.5 g
3.5 ounces of lean rump roast	2.7 g
1 large egg	1.5 g
2 tablespoons red pepper dip (with sour cream)	2.5 g
2 teaspoons olive oil	1.5 g
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan	2.5 g
1 tablespoon mayonnaise	0.5 g
1 tablespoon crunchy peanut butter	2.5 g

— Diana Swift

Got a medical question? Email us at editor@canadian-health.ca or write to Editor, *Canadian Health*, 6 Withrow Avenue, Toronto ON M4K 1C9. 