

short takes

USABLE NEWS + TIPS BONNIE SCHIEDEL

TIRED TIRES



Are you driving on really old tires? Some safety experts are concerned that tires that are relatively new to the vehicle — but have been sitting on a shelf for a while before purchase — can be hazardous because the rubber may deteriorate with age as well as use. Look for the four numbers to the left of the maple leaf symbol, which means the manufacturer certifies that the tire meets Transport Canada requirements. The first two numbers refer to the week in which a tire was made, and the last two refer to the year. For example, 1702 means the 17th week of 2002. For tires manufactured before the year 2000, check the last three numbers (438, for example, means the 43rd week of 1998).

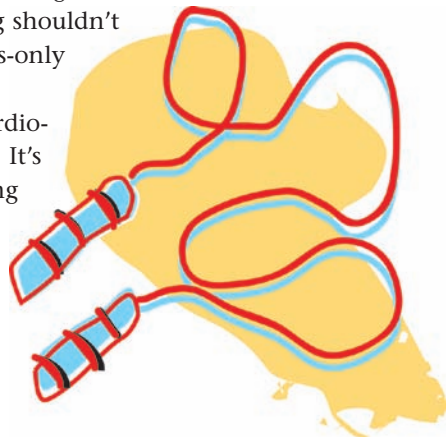
WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Subluxation

Subluxation (from the Latin verb meaning to displace) refers to the partial dislocation of a joint, as opposed to a luxation, or complete dislocation. It is characterized by intense pain for a short period and the sensation that the joint has slipped out of the socket and then back in again. An example of this injury is radial head subluxation, most often seen in children under age three, whose ligaments are undeveloped. This occurs when the radius, one of the two long bones in the forearm, has pulled away from its usual position (for example, when a child is lifted by the arm up over a curb or swung around by the arms). Then, the ligament that supports the radial bone slips into the elbow joint and the bone is unable to move back into its normal place.

MOVE OF THE MONTH Don't Skip This!

Kids skipping is a sure sign of spring, but skipping shouldn't be considered a kids-only activity. "It's a very efficient form of cardio-respiratory exercise. It's also a weight-bearing exercise, so it's good for increasing and maintaining bone density. It also helps develop balance, good posture, strength and agility," says Liz Way, a certified fitness trainer in Dundas, Ont. — not to mention a former Canadian National Champion in speed skipping and double dutch. Plus, a jump rope is inexpensive and portable. Follow Way's tips for a skipping workout.



- ▶ Jump just high enough to clear the rope. This helps to prevent stress on your joints. Stand up tall, using your trunk's core muscles to help your posture, and relax your shoulders.
- ▶ Use a rope that just reaches up to your armpits.
- ▶ If you're a beginner, jump for 15 seconds, then march on the spot for 45 seconds. Gradually increase the amount of time you jump.
- ▶ Try "double unders" (two repetitions of the rope with each jump) and "criss-crosses" (crossing the rope in front of you to work your back muscles). Or alternate fast and slow jumping intervals.

PHOTO: DENIS VOROB/VEVISTOCKPHOTO; ILLUSTRATION: CONNIE MORRIS

music for moms-to-be



Listening to soothing music is a simple and effective way to calm stressed or depressed pregnant women, according to a recent study published in the *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. Women who were assigned to listen to one of four 30-minute CDs every day for two weeks scored significantly lower on scales that measure depression, stress and anxiety, compared with women who got standard prenatal care with no music therapy. The CDs featured pieces that had 60 to 80 beats per minute (similar to the rhythm of a human heartbeat) and included classical and nature music as well as nursery rhymes.

Are you at risk for DVT?

DVT, or deep venous thrombosis, occurs when a blood clot — known as a thrombus — forms in a large vein, usually in the leg. The clot partially or totally blocks blood circulation, causing pain and swelling and leading to serious health complications — or even death if not diagnosed and properly treated. DVT can occur in anyone, but certain people are more at risk.

Pick a group you think is at risk.

- 1 The elderly
- 2 The obese
- 3 Cancer patients
- 4 Women using birth control pills or post-menopausal hormone replacement therapy
- 5 Pregnant women
- 6 Those having major surgery

ANSWER All of the above. Other risk factors include long periods of immobility (such as prolonged bedrest or an extended airplane ride), trauma and an inherited predisposition to clots. Had DVT before? If you are still having symptoms one month or more after diagnosis and treatment, you have an increased chance of developing post-thrombotic syndrome, reports a study from McGill University in Montreal. "The syndrome is characterized by persistent leg pain and swelling. In severe cases, patients can develop painful leg ulcers, which are very difficult to treat," says study author Dr. Susan Kahn, an associate professor in the faculty of medicine and director of the Thrombosis Program at the Jewish General Hospital.

Myth or Reality?

Fresh produce is more nutritious than frozen.

Myth Some frozen fruits and vegetables may deliver more nutrients than fresh — if they've been picked at their peak and processed upon harvesting. And the produce in the supermarket can be older and staler than you think. Fresh produce can spend days being sorted, transported and packaged, during which time exposure to light and temperature changes can reduce nutrients such as vitamin C, folate and beta carotene. But frozen items can lose nutrients through pre-freezing blanching. And fresh foods win hands down for taste and texture. Frozen produce may contain added salt or sugar, so read the labels before you buy. Choose frozen produce that is loose, not stuck together, which may indicate thawing and refreezing. Steam or microwave both fresh and frozen items to conserve nutrients. — Diana Swift



MOTHERHOOD MADE EASIER

Pregnancy and early motherhood may be joyful times, but no one ever said they were easy. So we've assembled three products to help things go more smoothly. Whether you're trying to conceive, dealing with the discomforts of pregnancy or coping with a colicky newborn, check out the following selections.



WELL BEGUN

Healthy Beginnings: Giving Your Baby the Best Start From Preconception to Birth by Nan Schuurmans, Vyta Senikas and André B. Lalonde. 4th edition (Wiley, 2009).

"Pregnancy is a special time in a woman's life as she prepares for the life-changing event of adding a new member to the family," says Dr. Nan Schuurmans, co-author of *Healthy Beginnings* and a clinical professor in the obstetrics and gynecology department at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. "Knowing how your body prepares for birth and what your growing baby needs has been shown to make a big difference in how well your pregnancy progresses and how healthy your newborn will be."

Enter *Healthy Beginnings*, a uniquely Canadian handbook based on the clinical guidelines of the 3,000+-member Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada. It guides you along the road to motherhood from the period before conception to those first moments when you assume your rewarding

role as the parent of a newborn child.

Providing essential information for making healthy choices during pregnancy, it also serves as a notebook in which to record the details of your pregnancy and prenatal visits as well as your evolving emotions and the birthing experience. \$19.95. For more information, call 1 800 561 2416 or go to www.sogc.org.

B-NATAL VITAMIN B THERAPOP OR LOZENGE

Sweet relief from the morning sickness that affects 80% of pregnant women may be only a candy away. Sucking on a cherry-flavoured lollipop or an apple-flavoured lozenge — each containing 25 milligrams of pyridoxine (vitamin B₆) — might help. These are natural non-prescription remedies designed to curb the waves of nausea and/or vomiting associated with pregnancy (NVP). Experts don't know precisely how B₆ works but think that levels of this vitamin may be insufficient in pregnant women compared with women of similar age who are not pregnant.



B₆ is less likely to cause side effects than other over-the-counter treatments for NVP. If your pharmacist doesn't have these in stock, download the order

form on the B-Natal website below and take it to your druggist for ordering.

Cherry TheraPop, Green Apple Lozenge. Suggested retail price ranges from \$20 to \$25 for 28 lollipops or lozenges. For more information, call 1 866 980 3377 or go to www.bnatal.ca.

BIOGAIA PROBIOTIC PRODUCTS

These supplements, which come both in drops and lemon-lime-flavoured chewable tablets, contain *Lactobacillus reuteri*, a benevolent type of intestinal bacteria normally found in humans.

L. reuteri can help improve gut function and help reduce the incidence of diarrhea, gastrointestinal infections and other gut problems.

Studies have also shown that this strain reduces colic in infants. If a baby has colic — crying for three hours or more in a day for three days a week, usually during the first three months of life — BioGaia drops could help. An older child with diarrhea or constipation may also benefit from the tablets.

Each dose — five drops or one tablet — provides 100 million cells. The product becomes active through contact with saliva, and the bacteria proliferate in the intestines. Ask your pharmacist for these products. Drops, 25-day supply, \$31.99. Tablets, 30-day supply, \$33.99. For more information, call 1 866 980 3377 or go to www.biogaia.com.

— Laura Jones



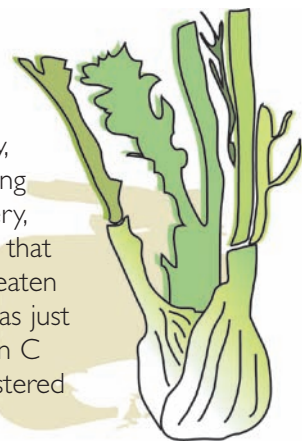
Corn, Nuts and Popcorn, Oh My!

Do you avoid nuts, popcorn and fresh corn for fear of triggering diverticulitis (an often painful inflammation of small pouches in the lining of the large intestine)? You may be able to indulge in these healthy high-fibre foods after all. “The original thinking was that poorly digested foods such as nuts may get stuck in those little pouches and cause irritation,” says the lead author of the study, Dr. Lisa Strate, a gastroenterologist and an assistant professor at the University of Washington in Seattle. “This recommendation, however, didn’t have any basis in the literature, so we decided to investigate.” She and her colleagues looked at data from an 18-year study of almost 50,000 health professionals ages 40 to 75 and found no link between the consumption of those foods and the risk of diverticulitis. In fact, the men who ate those foods at least twice a week had the lowest incidence of diverticulitis. Of course, if these foods bother you, it makes sense to avoid them, she adds.

FROM TOP: AMANDA ROHDE/ISTOCKPHOTO; CONNIE MORRIS; JOHN PHILLIPS

Eat this!

Add crunchy, delicious fennel to your springtime meals. Looking like a cross between a leek and a bunch of celery, this pale green veggie has a sweet licorice taste that adds zing to stir-fries and soups. It is also zesty eaten raw in salads or with dips. “A half-cup serving has just 14 calories and contains fibre, potassium, vitamin C and many antioxidants,” says Lisa Dooley, a registered dietitian in St. John’s, Nfld.



short takes

YOUR MEDICAL IQ

PEYRONIE'S DISEASE refers to...

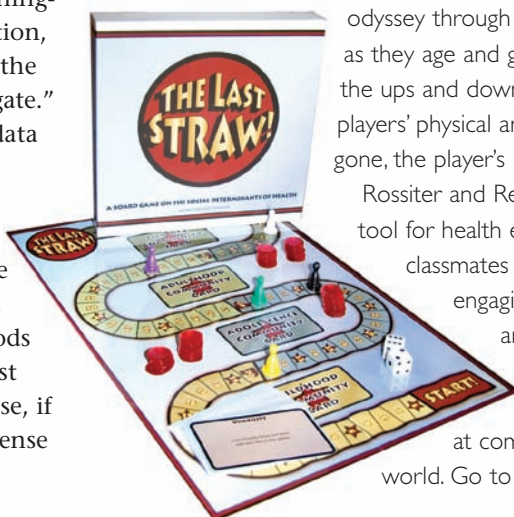
- 1 a disease caused by a vitamin A deficiency
- 2 a condition that causes a bent penis
- 3 a contagious skin rash often seen in children
- 4 a rare form of jaundice

Answer 2 A layer of scar tissue under the skin of the penis pulls the organ to one side when it is erect, causing it to look bent or curved. Peyronie's disease can be painful and cause erectile dysfunction, so affected men should speak with their doctors about treatment options, which include drugs and surgery.

STAYING HEALTHY — NO TRIVIAL PURSUIT

In real life, predicting who will and who will not enjoy good health is not much of a gamble — our socio-economic backgrounds play a critical part in how long and how well we live (see “Wealth, Health and Medicare,” p. 24). That's the premise put into playful practice in *The Last Straw!* — an award-winning board game released in 2007 by Canadian health-science graduate students Kate Rossiter and Kate Reeve.

The Last Straw! reduces the biological and social circumstances of human existence to a serendipitous roll of the dice. Through a series of throws made at the outset, players are “born” into a set of circumstances that include gender, race and socio-economic status. They then embark upon a snakes-and-ladders-like odyssey through the stages of life, adjusting their profiles as they age and gaining or losing Vitality Chips according to the ups and downs of life events and their impact on the players' physical and mental health. When the final chip is gone, the player's life is finished (the last straw).



Rossiter and Reeve devised *The Last Straw!* as a teaching tool for health educators and students when they were classmates at the University of Toronto. With engaging elements of co-operation, discussion and meeting the challenges of staying healthy, the dynamic game is being played on campuses, in health units and at community-group gatherings around the world. Go to www.thelaststraw.ca. — Tracy C. Read