



PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

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WEST WINDSOR HEALTH DEPARTMENT
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SPRING INTO HEALTH!

SEASONAL ALLERGIES



If you are one of the 50 million Americans who suffer from allergies, you know the reality of a life of sneezing, coughing, stuffed up nose and itchy, watery eyes. Allergies are diseases of the immune system that cause an overreaction to substances called "allergens". Some allergens are present year-round in your home, such as dust and dust mites, mold spores, pet dander and saliva.

Seasonal allergies can make matters worse when combined with indoor allergens. Outdoor allergens include tree, grass and weed pollen, spores, mold, mildew and pollutants.

Often allergy symptoms can mimic those of a common cold. Keep track of your symptoms and when they appear. An allergist can determine your specific allergies and help plan strategies for finding relief.

Once you determine which allergens cause you trouble ... STAY AWAY FROM THEM!

- Use a portable HEPA air filter in your bedroom. HEPA filters can remove 99.7% of dust, mold, spores, pollen and pet dander from the air.
- Change your clothes and shower when you come in from outside. Pollen sticks to your hair and clothes and can aggravate your symptoms. Leave your shoes at the door.
- Remove carpets or rugs, especially in the bedroom. Use mini-blinds and wash them often.
- Keep pets out of the bedroom and especially off the bed. In addition to dander and saliva, pets can carry pollen grains in from outside.

- Wash all your bed linens weekly, including pillows, in hot water to kill dust mites. Use hypo-allergenic fiberfill pillows.
- Use a HEPA or electrostatic filter in your furnace or air conditioner. Cover the vents for forced air systems with a filter.
- Keep the windows closed and use an air conditioner. Clean your home and car air conditioners at the beginning of each allergy season. Change the filter regularly.
- Use a dehumidifier in damp areas to control mold and mildew. Don't sleep in basement areas.
- Watch the weather! Rain usually brings relief to pollen sufferers because it washes away the pollen particles. Mold sufferers do worse after a few rainy days because damp weather helps mold and mildew to grow.

ASTHMA is a chronic disease that affects the lungs' airways. In asthma, the inside walls of the airways are inflamed or swollen, allowing less air to flow through the lungs. While there is no cure for asthma, it can be controlled by taking medication and avoiding or limiting asthma "triggers". Work with your healthcare provider to develop a personal Asthma Action Plan.



For more information, visit the Allergy and Asthma Foundation of America at www.aafa.org or the Pediatric Coalition of New Jersey at www.pacnj.org.

SPRING INTO ACTION!



Let's be honest ... many of us tend to hibernate during the colder, darker winter months. Now that the weather is warmer and the days are getting longer, it's the perfect time to establish a healthy exercise

routine. Even if you haven't exercised in the past, now is the perfect time to get started.

Set realistic goals. Whether your goal is to lose weight, tone up, feel stronger or have a healthier body, be honest about what you can - and are willing - to do. Everyone has different levels of ability: the important thing is to stay active and make progress at your own pace.

Make it easy. When do you have the most energy and time? Schedule more activity into your daily calendar, especially if you don't enjoy exercising. If you can't find 30 minutes on most days of the week to exercise, break it up into three, 10 minute sessions.

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Become more active. Pick three ways that you can become more active and make a plan. Write it down where you'll see it every day – on the refrigerator, wall calendar or on a sticky note stuck to your bathroom mirror. Keep track your progress and "tweak" your strategies.

Try it for 21 days. Make a three week commitment to your plan. That's how long it takes to form a new habit. If you lapse back into your old ways, just re-commit to your plan ... and start again!

Take advantage of your "TO DO" list. Don't delegate chores others. Do yardwork, mop the floor, walk the dog. Spring cleaning, gardening and home repair projects can all provide a good workout while you're sprucing up your home.



Talk with your healthcare provider before beginning any exercise program if you are over 60 years old, have a preexisting medical condition or are sedentary.

Forget "no pain, no gain". Exercise should require some effort, but extreme discomfort isn't necessary. Pain is actually a warning sign that shouldn't be ignored. If an exercise makes your muscles sore, you can do it again the next day to help work out the soreness, but with less intensity and for a shorter period of time.

Respect the sun. It's easy to forget sunscreen when the weather is mild, but your skin needs protection from ultraviolet (UV) rays year-round. Apply a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 to all exposed areas of your body whenever you are outdoors. Wear sunglasses that block UV light, since exposure to direct and indirect sunlight over many years can increase the risk of cataracts.

SPRING CLEAN YOUR DIET

TARGET 1: White Grains

White bread, pasta and rice are staples of the American diet. White grain products are typically enriched, which means some nutrients are replaced that were stripped away during the refining or “whitening” process. Even so, it doesn't pack the nutritional punch of whole grains, since the natural fiber and all the micronutrients can't be replaced.

Choose whole grain products. Read the label: 100% whole wheat or brown rice should be the only ingredient, or the first ingredient in a “blended” product. Mix refined and whole grain versions for a gradual change.



TARGET 2: Soda and Fruit Drinks

Soda, sweetened ice tea, sports drinks and fruit ades are delicious ... and full of empty calories. Just one 12 ounce serving of a sweetened beverage adds 150 empty sugar calories - and that's a regular sized can, not the typical 20 oz. single serve bottle or super-sized convenience store cup.

Choose water! Add a spritz or lemon or lime juice, or try flavored seltzer. You can drink “diet” soda, ice tea or sports drink that use artificial sweeteners for an occasional sweeter treat.



TARGET 3: Full Fat Dairy

Dairy is an excellent source of protein and calcium. But full fat dairy products like whole milk, sour cream and regular cheese are also excellent sources of saturated fat and dietary cholesterol. A large glass of whole milk actually has 1½ times the fat as a small hamburger patty.

Choose reduced and fat free dairy products. Like the switch from refined to whole grains, slowly shift towards lower fat versions of your favorites.

Today's low fat cheeses are much better in taste, texture and "melt-ability" than past versions. Especially when used in recipes, you may not even be able to tell the difference from the full fat version.

TARGET 4: Frozen Foods

Fish sticks and chicken nuggets are quick and easy meals - just zap in the microwave and they're ready in minutes. However, they are usually breaded and deep fried which turns healthy fish and poultry into dietary disasters. Be wary of frozen entrees: they're often high in sodium and fat, and low in the high quality protein and vegetables that help you feel full.

Choose frozen grilled fish fillets and chicken patties to get the convenience without the fat. Check the label on frozen dinners, even if they sound healthy. While meals like *Lean Cuisine* and *Healthy Choice* are often lower in fat and calories than traditional frozen meals, the counts can vary significantly. Choose meals with 300 calories or less and add a generous serving of steamed vegetables or a side salad with low fat dressing.

Moderation is the key when “spring cleaning” what you choose to eat and drink. The temptation is to do a major overhaul, but you'll find it easier to stick with smaller, more manageable changes for the 21 days it takes to establish a new habit.

The goal is to establish (and maintain) a healthy diet and a healthy weight. In the end, the only habits that work are the ones that you can keep.

SPRING CLEANING ... NATURALLY



Do you keep hazardous chemicals in your home? Probably, since many are disguised as common household cleaning products. Although packaged for consumer use, their misuse causes thousands of deaths, serious injuries and illnesses each year.

You can use non-chemical, less toxic alternatives for ...

- **GENERAL HOUSEHOLD CLEANER.** Baking soda can clean, deodorize, scour, polish and remove stains. Sprinkle on carpets instead of perfumed carpet cleaners. Pour a mixture of vinegar and baking soda followed by boiling water down a sluggish drain instead of an “unclogger” like *Drano* or *Liquid Plumber*. Use it on a damp sponge to scrub fiberglass showers, bathtubs and bathroom tiles instead of a commercial “Scum Free” product.
- **WINDOW & GLASS CLEANER.** Spray equal amounts of white vinegar and water with a pump bottle. Dry with a soft cloth or dry newspapers for a streak free shine.
- **SPOT REMOVER.** Remove spots as soon as they happen with club soda, lemon juice and hot water, or borax (a mild abrasive cleaner) and cold water.
- **AIR FRESHENER.** Simmer potpourri, cinnamon sticks and cloves or citrus rinds in water on the stove to naturally sweeten the air. Soak a cotton ball with vanilla extract and set it on the counter in a saucer. Place baking soda in decorative bowls to naturally neutralize most odors without adding a scent to the room.
- **RUST REMOVER.** Sprinkle coarse salt on rust stains and squeeze a lime or lemon over them. Let sit for several hours and wipe off.



PROPER DISPOSAL OF MEDICATION

Unused or expired medications should NEVER be poured down the drain or flushed down the toilet. Wastewater treatment plants are not equipped to remove pharmaceutical compounds, so they may end up in our waterways and drinking water.

- 1 Keep prescription medicines in their original containers. Mark out personal information on the labels for safety.
- 2 Mix liquid medicine with an inedible substance like coffee grounds, cat litter, cayenne pepper or dirt. Dissolve pills with water or soda before adding an inedible substance.
- 3 Secure bottle lids with duct or packing tape, put them in an opaque container like a coffee can or margarine tub and tape the container closed, or wrap in a dark colored plastic bag.
- 4 Hide the container in the trash. Do NOT recycle.

Contact the Health Department for upcoming **TAKE BACK** days where you can safely dispose of unused or expired medicines.



Each day, up to 700,000 syringes, needles and lancets (**SHARPS**) are used in New Jersey homes. Keep this medical waste out of the trash! For more information about the proper disposal of home generated sharps call (609) 588-3124 or go to www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/phss/syringe.pdf for a complete list of hospitals that will accept used sharps.