

# WELCOA'S **spark16**

IGNITE YOUR BEST YOU.

FEATURING  
16 GREAT WAYS TO...  
STAY HEALTHY &  
HAPPY DURING  
THE HOLIDAYS

Pages 4-5

A MONTHLY HEALTHLETTER FROM THE WELLNESS COUNCIL OF AMERICA

## 1,2,3 ZZZZZZ's 3 Step Plan To Better Sleep

If you're always running low on sleep, it's likely that you often reach for a sugary drink and perhaps a doughnut or cookie for a quick shot of energy. Moreover, in a constant sleep-deprived state you are probably more prone to skip the gym and pick up takeout on your way home—after all you're just too tired to cook.

It's easy to see how this vicious cycle can lead to weight gain. Here's how to stay out of this heavy trap:

**1. Make an all-out commitment to going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.** This will cause your body to release melatonin (the hormone that makes you sleepy) at a consistent time every night—helping you fall asleep and awake more easily. If you do have a late night, try to make up for this the next night by sleeping the extra hours you missed.

**2. Avoid caffeine and alcohol before bed.** It's ok to have your morning coffee and perhaps one glass of wine with dinner, but anything excessive and within two hours of your bedtime can interfere with your ability to fall and stay asleep.

**3. Create a sleep ritual.** It's much easier to get to sleep and stay asleep when you have a healthy routine. So, take some time to wind down. Take a warm bath, read a book, listen to some music, or just focus on deep breathing.

# GET SLEEP LOSE WEIGHT? *A Look at Your Dream Diet...*



If you can't seem to drop a few pounds or have noticed that you have put a couple extra on, you may want to examine your sleep habits before you panic and do something silly like start an extreme diet. Indeed, a significant amount of research shows the risk for obesity is consistently higher for those who get less than six nightly hours of sleep. In fact, a review published in the American Journal of Human Biology found evidence linking insufficient sleep to an increase in body fat.

### The Sleep & Weight Connection

When you don't get enough sleep, it causes two appetite-controlling hormones to get thrown out of whack:

**Ghrelin** is a hormone produced in the gastrointestinal tract which stimulates appetite.

**Leptin** is a hormone produced in fat cells, and it sends a signal to the brain when you are full.

When you don't get enough sleep, leptin levels decrease, which means you don't feel as satisfied after you eat. Furthermore, lack of sleep causes ghrelin levels to rise, which means you'll experience an increased appetite. These findings are backed by two major studies conducted at the University of Chicago and at Stanford University. These studies also found that those who slept the fewest hours per night weighed the most.

### What's The Magic Number?

Most adults need between seven and nine hours of quality sleep per night. Experts point out that if you are getting this amount already, another half hour will not help you lose 10 pounds, but if you are a five-hour sleeper and start to consistently sleep between seven and nine hours a night, it's likely that you may experience some weight loss.

**Fast Fact:** A study published in *Science Translational Medicine* confirmed previous findings suggesting that sleep-deprived people tend to eat more and crave unhealthy processed foods.



**MORE HEALTH  
TIPS INSIDE**

This Month's Recipe:

# Quick Homemade Veggie Pizza

This recipe totally shatters the myth that eating pizza can't be part of a healthy diet! It also buries the misconception that making "homemade pizza" is a long and arduous task. Anyone can whip up this wholesome pizza in a flash.

Here is how you make this meal...

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 6-8 inch 100% whole wheat tortilla or 100% whole wheat pita pocket, slightly toasted
- 2-3 Tbsp canned tomato paste (low-sodium is best)
- ¼ cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese or 2% milk cheese
- 1 cup baby spinach leaves or 1 cup thawed frozen spinach
- 3 Tbsp chopped canned roasted red peppers
- 1 Tbsp pine nuts (optional)
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh basil leaves
- 1 clove minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp balsamic vinaigrette

## INSTRUCTIONS:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spread the tomato paste evenly over the slightly toasted tortilla or pita bread. Top with remaining ingredients in this order:

Cheese, spinach, peppers, pine nuts, basil and garlic. Drizzle or sprinkle the balsamic vinaigrette evenly over the prepared pizza.

Carefully place the pizza on a cookie sheet sprayed with pan spray and place in the oven. Cook until the cheese melts and the spinach (if fresh) wilts (about 7-10 minutes).

Let it cool a bit before serving.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
GRAM  
FOR GRAM  
SPINACH HAS MORE  
PROTEIN THAN  
GROUND BEEF



**Dr. Ann**  
Ann Kulze, M.D.

With formal training in nutrition and medicine, plus hands-on experience as a mother of four and family physician, Dr. Ann is a unique nutrition expert for the real world.

The whole food ingredients found in Dr. Ann's recipes are the right foods for health and vitality. Nutritional excellence naturally follows.

For more, visit [DrAnnWellness.com](http://DrAnnWellness.com).



## SUPERSTAR FOOD OF THE MONTH: Mushrooms

Mushrooms are great for you! Super low in calories (20 calories per ½ cup), but high in key nutrients, including B vitamins, copper, potassium, and selenium—it's wise to get into the health habit of including them regularly in your diet. As an added bonus, mushrooms are especially high in a class of beneficial polysaccharides that enhance immune function.



# Mind over Munchies!

## Tricks & Tips To End Mindless Eating

Overeating is undoubtedly one reason why so many of us struggle to maintain a healthy weight. But before you blame yourself for being gluttonous, take comfort in the fact that we live in a food-centric culture. For most of us, food is everywhere—in grocery stores, vending machines and convenience stores, just to name a few. Indeed, with so much food marketing and availability, it can be hard to pay attention to your body's true hunger and satiety signals.

The good news is that you can train your brain to overcome your habits of unhealthy mindless eating, and moreover, get in tune with your body's true hunger and satiety (or fullness) signals. Try these key strategies:

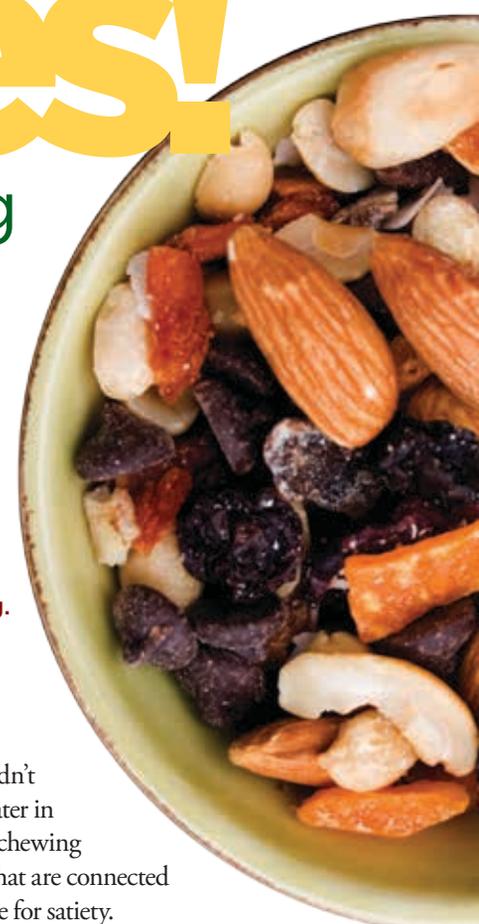
**Don't skip meals (especially breakfast).** Skip breakfast and you're only setting yourself up to feel ravenous by lunch. You're likely to have intense cravings and overeat when you skip meals. To help stay satisfied from one meal to the next, focus on meals that consist of complex carbs (not refined ones like white bread and pasta) fiber and a lean protein.

**Give yourself 20 minutes before giving in to a craving.** In many cases you may want cookies or chips not because you're hungry, but because those foods comfort you or help you celebrate. To be sure, it's easy to mistake a craving for true hunger, so waiting 20 minutes before eating that snack can help you distinguish between the two. If you still want something 20 minutes later, chances are you really are hungry. And of course, when you are hungry, focus on foods that will truly satisfy your hunger (as highlighted in the box below).

### **Chew gum in the morning.**

A University of Rhode Island study found that people who chewed gum for one hour in the morning consumed 67 fewer calories at lunch and didn't compensate by eating more later in the day. Experts suggest that chewing stimulates nerves in the jaw that are connected to the brain region responsible for satiety.

**Don't eat in front of a screen.** When did you truly enjoy a meal in front of the computer or TV? Probably never because you probably ate so fast that you barely even tasted your food. Moreover, eating in front of a screen distracts you so that you stop paying attention to what or how much you're eating or whether you're full enough to stop eating.



## SUPERSTAR FOODS FOR APPETITE CONTROL

If you feel full longer, you are less likely to give into mindless eating and overeating. Focus on these nutritional powerhouses that not only fuel your body with the nutrients it needs, but also curb your appetite.

**Healthy animal proteins:** fish, shell fish, skinless poultry, omega-3 eggs, low-fat dairy products (especially plain Greek yogurt).

**Plant proteins:** whole soy foods, nuts, seeds, and beans (especially beans!).

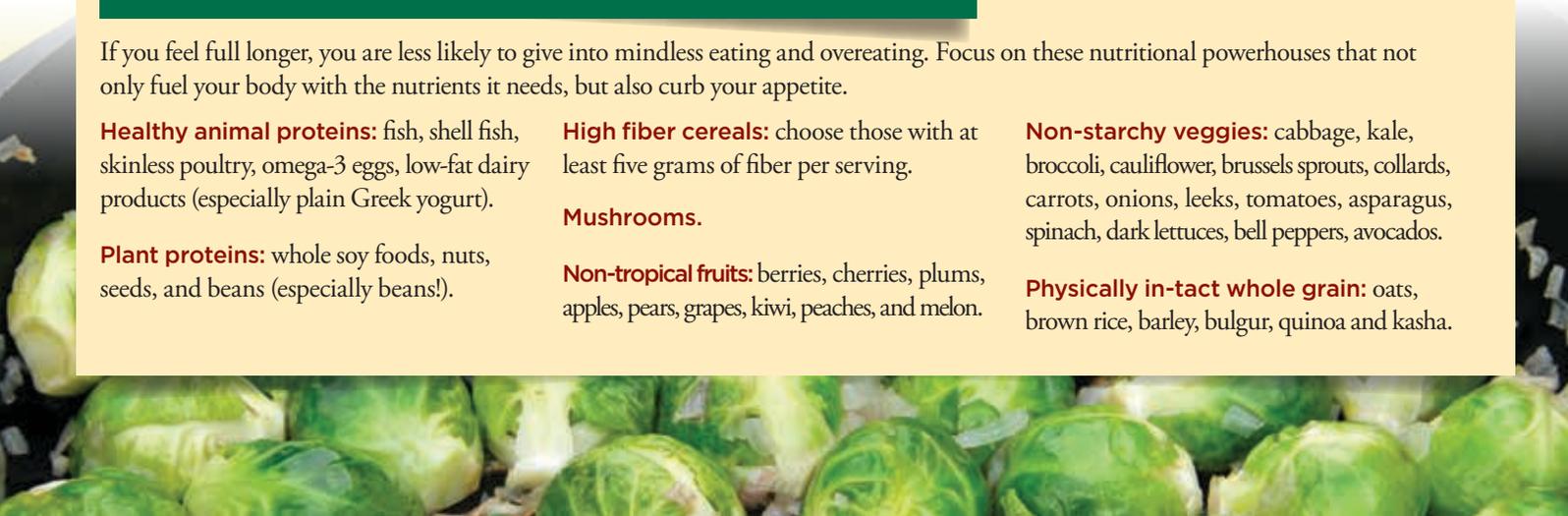
**High fiber cereals:** choose those with at least five grams of fiber per serving.

**Mushrooms.**

**Non-tropical fruits:** berries, cherries, plums, apples, pears, grapes, kiwi, peaches, and melon.

**Non-starchy veggies:** cabbage, kale, broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, collards, carrots, onions, leeks, tomatoes, asparagus, spinach, dark lettuces, bell peppers, avocados.

**Physically in-tact whole grain:** oats, brown rice, barley, bulgur, quinoa and kasha.





## Hot Cocoa Recipe

Heat  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup non-fat milk in a saucepan over medium heat until just before boiling. Remove from heat and transfer to a large mug. Stir in 1 ounce chopped dark chocolate (at least 70% cacao) pieces.

# KEEP HEALTHY

**1** Start your own tradition if the holidays bring you down. If the thought of doing the same 'ol is already making you feel anxious, take charge by creating a new tradition you'll enjoy. Maybe this includes a non-traditional holiday meal in which everyone brings their favorite snack food.

**2** Hold a cup of coffee or hot tea during a holiday party. With a hot beverage in hand, you're less likely to go wild at the buffet table.

**3** Check your produce aisle for cheap and seasonal decorations. The most beautiful decorations are usually the simplest—strung cranberries, pumpkins, gourds, etc. These classics make your home festive at a fraction of the cost.

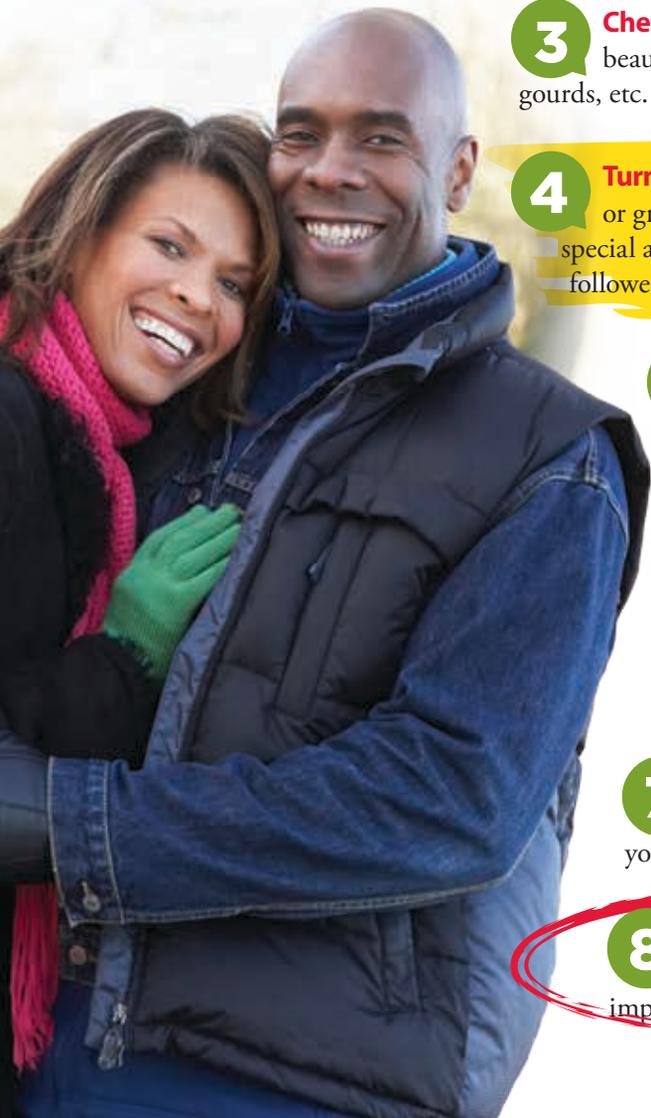
**4** Turn typical holiday chores into fun outings. Whether it's shopping, baking or greeting cards, make whatever it is you find drudgery enjoyable by making it special and different. For example, invite some friends over for a tree-trimming night followed by some great food and your favorite holiday movies.

**5** Sniff on some peppermint. Peppermint oil has been shown to increase memory and alertness, which can provide you with a great pick-me-up in the busy holiday season. Peppermint products are plentiful this time of year—find one you like and whiff away!

**6** Stand under the mistletoe, often. A recent study led by researchers from Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine reported that of 2,000 couples who kiss infrequently and at expected times are eight times more likely to report suffering from stress and depression than those who frequently kiss on the spur of the moment.

**7** Drink hot cocoa a few times a week for a quick and delicious health boost. Dark chocolate contains flavanols, which help protect your cells from environmental toxins and help repair cell damage.

**8** Sing. Grab some friends and go caroling. Researchers in Norway found that hospital employees who took part in a choir program reported both improved health and greater engagement at work.



# Tips To Y AND HAPPY This Holiday Season

Remember to talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

**9 Walk in your winter wonderland.** Not only will you squeeze in much needed exercise, but you'll find that experiencing the lights and beautiful colors of the season up close is more rewarding than a simple drive-by.

**10 Carry a bottle of water and healthy snack with you at all times.** When you have these healthy essentials with you when you're out and about you'll be less likely to hit the drive-thru or consume a convenient bag of chips.

**11 Eat a snack with a lean protein and complex carb before heading to a party.** This will satisfy you, but still allow you to indulge in a few bites of your favorite foods. Try a few slices of turkey on whole wheat bread.

**12 Focus on *maintaining* your weight. Trying to lose weight during the holidays may be unrealistic and cause undue stress.**

**13 Order sugar-free and non-fat versions of your favorite holiday beverages.** Festive beverages like peppermint mochas and creamy eggnogs can be packed with up to 500 calories each.

**14 Prep for small talk.** Many often dread parties because they feel uncomfortable in social situations. Arrive to the party with a few topics to discuss. For example, watch the news and brush up on your current events.

**15 Rehearse how you will say no.** You probably can't or don't want to go to every holiday party. Practice a polite and gracious way to say no before you deliver the news.

**16 Remember there's always an app for that.** If you're overwhelmed with the season, try leveraging technology to make it easier. Simply Google your need plus the word "app." For example, "Holiday Organizer App." Voilà—instant results and options!



## Cool Tool!

The **Decide Shopping & Price Predictor App** recommends whether you should buy an item now or wait for a better price. Scan a product's UPC barcode while in store to compare prices on the web and get an instant prediction that's 77% accurate, according to the developers.

## Bonus Tip!

### Wash your hands often.

'Tis the season for germs! Wash your hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds.



# Grandma WAS RIGHT!

## Five Sayings That Don't Hold Water

You've probably heard these sayings, but pay no attention to them!

- 1 You lose most of your body heat through your head.** You will lose heat through any uncovered body part, so if you're outside in the cold cover up from head to toe.
- 2 Cracking your knuckles will cause arthritis.** There's no proof that you'll develop arthritis by simply cracking your knuckles.
- 3 Going out with wet hair will cause a cold.** Colds are caused when you come into contact with a virus, whether your hair is wet and it's cold has no impact (other than feeling extra chilly).
- 4 Food quickly picked up from the floor is safe to eat.** Scientists put the "five-second rule" to the test. They found that food that comes into contact with a tile or wood floor does pick up large amounts of bacteria.
- 5 Sea salt is a healthier version of regular salt.** Common table salt contains roughly 2,300 milligrams of sodium per teaspoon. Sea salt also contains roughly 2,300 milligrams of sodium per teaspoon. In terms of sodium, they are roughly identical.

## Time-Tested Tips That Truly Keep You Healthy

### **AN APPLE A DAY KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY.**

Research shows that the compounds in apples called polyphenols may help to protect cells against DNA damage that can be caused by cancer—so an apple a day truly has health benefits.

**What grandma didn't mention:** Fruits like grapes, pears, cherries and berries also contain polyphenols. Some cereals, peas, beans and chocolate can also contribute to your daily polyphenolic intake. Moreover, a study published in *Nutrition* showed weight loss associated with a daily intake of three apples or three pears among overweight women.

### **CARROTS WILL HELP YOU SEE BETTER.**

While they won't actually improve your eyesight, carrots can help prevent vision problems. Researchers at the National Eye Institute found that people with higher intakes of beta-carotene, lutein, and zeaxanthin which are all found in carrots have a lower risk of age-related macular degeneration (ARMD).

**What grandma may not have mentioned:** Carrots may also make you look better! Carrots are also good for the skin because of their high vitamin A and beta-carotene content.

### **CRANBERRY JUICE PREVENTS BLADDER INFECTIONS.**

A study done at Harvard Medical School showed that the properties in cranberries destroy bacteria clinging to the wall of the bladder.

**What grandma may not have mentioned:** If you're prone to bladder infections, avoid coffee and alcohol, which are known to irritate the bladder.

### **CHICKEN SOUP CURES A COLD.**

Researchers from the University of Nebraska Medical Center put this saying to the test and found that chicken soup may contain a number of substances with medicinal benefits. They found that ingredients in the soup can act as a mild anti-inflammatory that can alleviate upper respiratory tract infections.

**What grandma didn't mention:** A can of chicken noodle soup is loaded with sodium. Opt for a low-sodium option or carefully watch your sodium intake for the rest of the day if you have a regular can.



# Is Chronic Inflammation the **ROOT** of all Chronic Disease?

Heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's and cancer are all very different and distinct diseases, but many scientists say they have one thing in common—**chronic inflammation.**

## Fight Chronic Inflammation

- ✓ **Move.** Even after just moderate physical activity, oxygen-rich blood is pumped throughout your body, which can help cut levels of inflammation. Additionally, active people have lower levels of C-reactive protein (CRP), a marker for inflammation.
- ✓ **Don't smoke and avoid second-hand smoke.**
- ✓ **Eat a diet rich in dietary fiber.** Greater dietary fiber consumption was associated with lower levels of C-reactive protein and other inflammation markers according to a study published in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism. Great sources of fiber include fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes. Aim to have at least one of each at each meal.
- ✓ **Maintain a healthy weight.** A report published in the Archives of Internal Medicine found that losing weight can lower C-reactive protein levels.
- ✓ **Control your blood pressure with a healthy diet and exercise.** This will reduce your risk of chronic diseases like heart disease and stroke and it may also lower your CRP level.
- ✓ **Eat fish two to three times a week.** The omega-3 fats in fish can reduce inflammation.

### What Is Chronic Inflammation?

Acute inflammation is the body's natural healing response to injury, infection or toxins. With acute inflammation the injured or infected part of your body may become painful, red, heated and/or swollen. This type of inflammation brings more nourishment and more immune activity to the affected area. But there's another kind of inflammation, known as systemic or chronic inflammation. When inflammation persists or serves no purpose (i.e., your body is not fighting a bacterial infection), it's known as chronic inflammation. Experts say when inflammation becomes chronic it can damage heart valves and brain cells, trigger strokes, and promote resistance to insulin, which can lead to diabetes.

Eating high-fiber fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes can help reduce the occurrence of chronic inflammation.

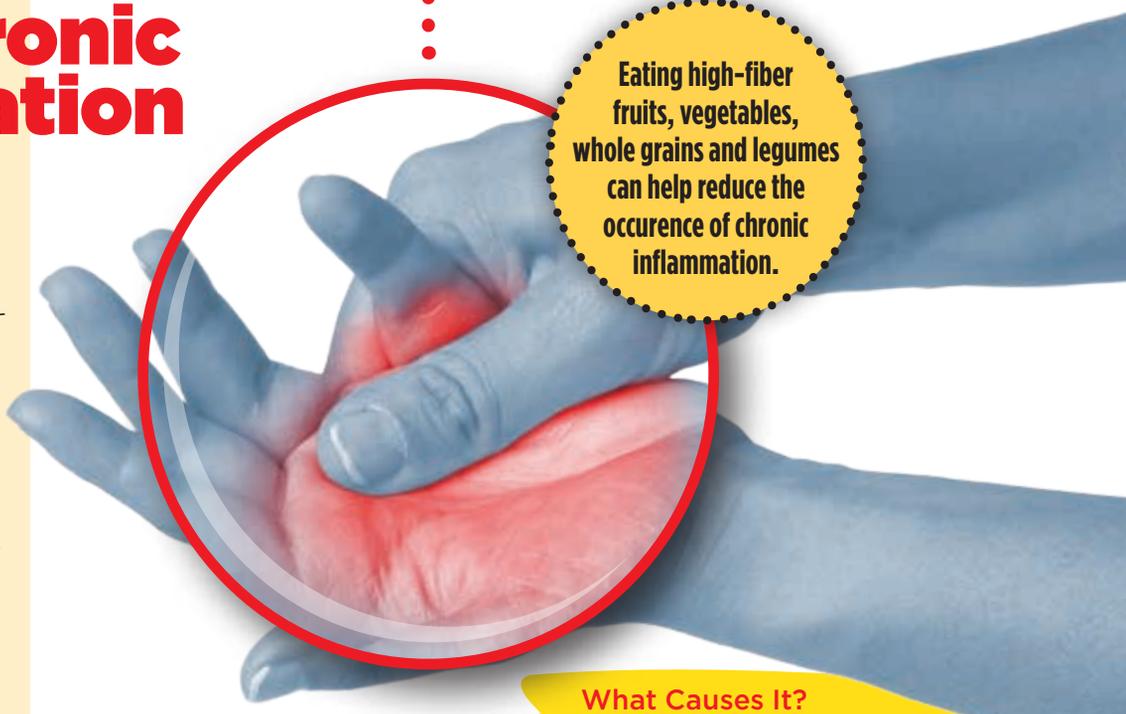
### What Causes It?

Stress, lack of exercise, dietary choices, obesity (especially excessive belly fat) and exposure to toxins (like secondhand tobacco smoke) can all contribute to chronic inflammation.

### Do You Have It?

There is an easy way to test for inflammation. Elevated levels of inflammatory markers known as high-sensitivity C-reactive protein (hsCRP) and C-reactive protein (CRP) indicate a heightened state of inflammation in the body. These simple blood tests can be done at the same time as cholesterol screenings, so talk to your healthcare professional about this option.

With or without these tests, one thing is clear—people with poor health habits tend to have higher levels of inflammation. So stick to the strategies listed in the left-hand column to fight and prevent chronic inflammation, and thus chronic disease.



In every issue you'll find 16 ridiculously simple ways to stay healthy!

## IN THIS ISSUE

- » Get Sleep, Lose Weight?
- » Introduce Strategy Into Your Snacking
- » 16 Tips For Staying Happy & Healthy During The Holidays
- » Four Health Tips That Grandma Already Told You
- » Taming Chronic Inflammation



## Anti-Inflammatory Diets... What are they & should you follow one?

There's practically no debate that chronic inflammation contributes to ill health and disease. However, there is some uncertainty around the concept of eating specific foods to avoid constant inflammation. There are several variations of an "anti-inflammatory" diet, and although there's no overwhelming evidence to support that these diets work to directly prevent inflammation, most of the recommended foods are in principle good choices:

- ✓ Eat fruits and vegetables every day
- ✓ Consume healthy fats, such as olive oil and canola oil
- ✓ Eat a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, such as fish and walnuts
- ✓ Eat plenty of whole grains such as brown rice, steel cut oats and quinoa
- ✓ Eat lean protein sources such as chicken and turkey and minimize your intake of red meat and full-fat dairy foods
- ✓ Avoid refined foods and processed foods (i.e., anything with more than three to five ingredients on the package)
- ✓ Incorporate spices like ginger, curry and turmeric, as spices can have an anti-inflammatory effect



## What's In A Number?

**\$2,280**

According to a recent longitudinal American Insomnia study, insomnia costs the average American worker \$2,280 in lost productivity each year.

**\$150**

The average price of some good bed sheets. Money spent on anything that can help you get better sleep is an excellent investment.

