Hello readers, I hope you had a good summer! Mine was a busy one! From having a great time with my family and our newest addition, to enjoying old friends who found time to make a trip to visit, it was a whirlwind.

We will soon be enjoying the wonderful aspects of fall. After lots of produce-picking and weed-pulling, I am looking forward to the cooler weather, the colorful leaves, and a break from bountiful harvests.

Stress was a theme that continually presented itself to me over the summer. I stressed about my personal life. I stressed about work. Then I over-analyzed the situation as I tried to find a balance between the two. Another subject that often crossed my mind was maintaining my health, which is ironic considering the impact that stress can have on health – both mind and body. After reflecting on the amount of time I’ve spent worrying about a variety of things, I decided to pause instead and appreciate the good things in my life. This has become a huge stress-reducer and a great way to change my mood—I recommend it!

I think true strength is found in the ability to say “no.” Although I am still working on this life skill, I realize that understanding and accepting my personal limits can help me make better choices. There is a strong connection between not knowing how much one can handle and making choices that result in the build-up of stress. If you are dealing with stress, begin by determining your limits then set boundaries based on what you discover. I hope you will find the following articles about saying “no” and managing stress helpful.
Keep the Bugs Away!

Most schools have officially started and fall is on its way, but it appears that some of the pesky bugs of summer are going to linger a bit longer. The most annoying of them all—mosquitoes and ticks—can survive well into the cooler fall season. Not only are they irritating pests, but they can also carry harmful diseases that are easily spread from one human or animal host to another. What’s even more alarming is the fact that the range of diseases as well as the geographical area that they cover seems to be increasing rapidly.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), ticks and mosquitoes are being discovered in areas they have not inhabited in the past, requiring people to reconsider how to protect themselves. When looking for ways to keep you and your family safe, look at repellants that contain at least 15% of one of the top active ingredients recommended by Consumer Reports. Through lab testing they discovered that the highest performing active ingredients were; Deet, Picardin, and Lemon Eucalyptus.

The Consumer Report research found that each of the above commercial repellent products, whether a spray or lotion, were equally effective in protecting against ticks and mosquitoes. The key to success was complete coverage of all areas with the product you select, applied in adequate amounts. This can be difficult to do with lotion once you are clothed, so in that case a spray is preferable. If lotion is placed on the skin before getting dressed, this will provide the same level of protection.

The surprising revelation reached through the Consumer Report lab testing was that many options marketed for repelling mosquitoes also worked for ticks.

Source: “How to Keep the Bugs Away,” Consumer Reports, September 2017

Because You Asked:

Q. I’ve been drinking soy milk daily for years. Since it contains phytoestrogens, I wonder if it puts me at higher risk of developing breast cancer?

A. Fang Fang Zhang, MD, PhD, a cancer epidemiologist, responds: “Soy foods contain phytoestrogens (plant-based estrogens) called isoflavones. These are structurally similar to the hormone estrogen. So, they bind to estrogen receptors, although less strongly than estrogen, and exert estrogen-like effects.

"Because a high level of circulating estrogen is a known risk factor for breast cancer, there has been concern that consumption of soy foods may increase women’s risk of developing breast cancer. However, the existing epidemiologic evidence (observational research) does not support that. On the contrary, some evidence suggests that a high intake of soy foods is associated with a reduced risk of breast cancer. The exact mechanisms for an anti-cancer effect are unclear but may include isoflavones inhibiting cell proliferation (an increase in cell number) and reducing inflammation and oxidative stress.

"Overall, epidemiologic studies consistently suggest no harm of soy food consumption in either women with or without breast cancer. So, continue to enjoy soy foods (preferably minimally processed ones) as part of an overall healthy and balanced diet.”

Source: Tufts Health & Nutrition Newsletter, Sept. 2017

Q. I recently lost my sense of taste. I can taste spices somewhat. Can you tell me if and how I can get back my sense of taste?

A. Richard M. Dupee, MD, chief of geriatrics at Tufts Medical Center answers: “Some loss of your sense of taste (and smell, which also plays a significant role in recognizing flavors) is natural with aging, especially after age 60. This happens as the density and number of taste buds diminishes, which is not reversible.

"Other factors that can contribute to loss of taste and smell, including nasal and sinus problems (i.e. allergies, sinusitis or nasal polyps), oral health problems, brain injury and deficiency of zinc (more common in vegetarians since top sources of this mineral are lean meats, poultry and some seafood).

"Certain drugs also may impair sense of smell and taste, such as some cardiovascular and blood pressure medications, especially beta blockers and angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors. If you’re taking any medications, check with your doctor to determine if a medication is the culprit. Your doctor might be able to make a change to your medication regimen.

"There is a tendency to add more salt and sweeteners to food to combat declining sense of taste, but that approach is not recommended and could be especially problematic in people with conditions such as hypertension, heart failure or diabetes. It is better to boost the use of herbs and spices to enhance the flavor of your food, and try foods with a variety of colors and textures to maximize enjoyment.”

Source: adapted from Tufts Health & Nutrition Newsletter, Sept. 2017
13 Thoughts to Make Saying “No” Easier

1. The first "no" to a person makes subsequent refusals easier.
2. The word "no" is enough. Lengthy explanations leave wiggle room for debate, misinterpretation, or permission to ask again.
3. Less is more. The less said in the way of excuses, the stronger the message.
4. Don’t apologize for being unavailable.
5. Having a reputation for being the person everyone leans on is not flattering and makes you a prime target for being railroaded into more "yeses."
6. Agreeing to do what others ask doesn’t make you a nicer person.
7. If you’re known for being able to juggle many tasks at once or for doing everything well, discredit that myth. Being a star performer simply begets more requests.
8. You can’t do enough for some people, don’t try.
9. Dissect each request carefully to make sure you are not being bribed, cajoled, bullied, or threatened.
10. Be aware of your limits; reconsidering and redefining your boundaries will make an “escape” easier.
11. Believe that you can say "no" and remain an involved, caring, and committed person.
12. Most people are understanding and forgiving. You don’t want the unforgiving ones in your life anyway.
13. Remind yourself daily that "no" is liberating and saying it is your right.

Back to Work—Keeping it Healthy

It can be challenging to maintain healthy activity levels once summer is over and you go from physical outdoor pursuits to sitting at a desk most of the day. The change from regular mobility to sitting and not moving much can be hard on your muscles as well as your joints, causing kinks and knots to form in your body, which then puts extra strain on your entire system. Research shows how detrimental the effects can be, with studies in the journal _Annals of Internal Medicine_ claiming that too much sitting can increase the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and cancer.

With reliable research documenting how harmful lack of movement can be on the human body, you might consider adapting your traditional work environment arrangement. Some of the new healthy set-ups currently available include standing desks, some with treadmills attached, and exercise ball chairs. While the new options may not be right for everyone, it could be worth a try. Please note that although a standing desk helps you sit less, it doesn’t necessarily mean you will put in enough steps to reach your daily physical activity requirements. Making one change will not cancel out the need to take care of your body with adequate physical activity and a healthy diet.

Muscle pain can also happen due to sleeping in an awkward position for prolonged periods of time. If you are having muscle discomfort, switch it up at work and bedtime to see if you notice a positive difference.

Source: "Home Sweet Home Office,” _Consumer Reports_, September 2017

10 Tips to Manage and Relieve Stress

It’s hard not to get overwhelmed sometimes. Between juggling work, family, and other commitments, you can become too busy and stressed out. It’s important to set time aside to unwind, or your mental and physical health can suffer. Learning how to manage your stress takes practice, but you can—and need to—do it.

1. **Exercise.** Working out regularly is one of the best ways to relax your body and mind. It will also improve your mood. For exercise to pay off you must do it often, although any exercise is better than none.

2. **Relax Your Muscles.** When you’re stressed, your muscles get tense. You can help loosen them up on your own and refresh your body by stretching, taking a hot bath or shower, or getting a good night’s sleep. Enjoying a massage is another great option.

3. **Eat Well.** Eating a regular, well-balanced diet will help you feel better in general. It may also help control your stress. Your meals should be full of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and lean protein for energy. Don’t skip meals—it’s not good for you and can put you in a bad mood which can increase your stress.

4. **Slow Down.** Sometimes we just need to slow down and chill out. Look at your life and find small ways you can do that.

5. **Take a Break.** You need to plan some real downtime to give your mind time off from stress. If you’re a person who likes to set goals, this may be hard for you at first. But stick with it and you’ll look forward to these moments. Restful things you can do include yoga, Tai chi, meditation, prayer, listening to your favorite music, or spending time in nature.

6. **Make Time for Hobbies.** Set aside time for things you enjoy. Try to do something every day that makes you feel good, and it will help relieve your stress. It doesn’t have to involve lots of time, even 15 to 20 minutes will do. Relaxing hobbies are things like reading, knitting, doing an art project, playing golf, watching a movie, and doing puzzles.

7. **Talk About Your Problems.** Talking about things that are bothering you can help lower your stress. You can talk to family members, friends, a trusted clergyman, your doctor, or a therapist. You can also talk to yourself. It’s called self-talk and we all do it. But for self-talk to help reduce stress you need to make sure it’s positive and not negative. Listen closely to what you’re thinking or saying when you’re stressed. If you’re giving yourself a negative message, change it to a positive one.

8. **Deep Breathing.** Stopping to take a few deep breaths can take the pressure off you right away. You’ll be surprised how much better you feel once you get good at it.

9. **Go Easy on Yourself.** Accept that you can’t do things perfectly no matter how hard you try. You also can’t control everything in your life. Be realistic about how much you can do. And don’t forget to keep up your sense of humor. Laughter goes a long way towards making you feel relaxed.

10. **Eliminate Your Triggers.** Figure out the biggest causes of stress in your life. If you’re able to identify what they are, see if you can eliminate them from your life, or at least reduce them. If you can’t identify the main causes, try keeping a stress journal. Make note of when you become most anxious and try to determine a pattern, then find ways to remove or lessen those triggers.

Source: Adapted from [http://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/tips-to-control-stress#1](http://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/tips-to-control-stress#1)

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**Harvest Recipe**

*Need a simple, in-season dish to share on Labor Day? Here is a cool and easy recipe.*

**GRILLED CORN & TOMATO SALSA**

- 2 cobs corn
- 2 poblano chili peppers, quartered lengthwise (or 1 - 2 jalapeños)
- 1 red bell pepper, quartered lengthwise
- ¾ lb. tomatoes, diced
- 1 avocado, diced
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- Juice of ½ lime

1. Heat a grill over high heat. Once hot, scrub and oil the grate. Grill the corn and peppers until charred in places, about 5 minutes, then remove from the grill and allow to cool.

2. Cut the corn from the cobs. Remove and discard the stems and seeds from the poblano and red peppers, then dice the peppers.

3. In a large bowl, toss the corn and peppers with the remaining ingredients.

**Nutrition Information (Serves 4)**

**Per Serving (1 cup):**
- Calories: 150; Total fat: 8 g; Sat fat: 1 g; Carbs: 18 g; Fiber: 6 g; Protein: 3 g; Sodium: 130 mg.

Source: [https://www.nutritionaction.com/daily/healthy-recipes/3-summery-recipes-labor-day-picnic/](https://www.nutritionaction.com/daily/healthy-recipes/3-summery-recipes-labor-day-picnic/)

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