



# HEALTH CENTRAL



A Guide to Healthy Happenings and Personal Wellness

November 2007

[www.dshs.state.tx.us/region7/PublicHealthImprovement.shtm/](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/region7/PublicHealthImprovement.shtm/)

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If you have any news about healthy happenings or wellness topics, please feel free to submit information to:

Public Health Improvement and Nutrition Program  
DSHS, Region - 7  
2408 S. 37th Street  
Temple, TX 76504-7168 or  
[Marjorie.Douglas@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:Marjorie.Douglas@dshs.state.tx.us)

## November is

### American Diabetes Month



Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy needed for daily life. The cause of diabetes continues to be a mystery, although both genetics and environmental factors such as obesity and lack of exercise appear to play roles.

There are 20.8 million children and adults in the United States, or 7% of the population, who have diabetes. While an estimated 14.6 million have been diagnosed with diabetes, unfortunately, 6.2 million people (or nearly one-third) are unaware that they have the disease.

In order to determine whether or not a patient has pre-diabetes or diabetes, health care providers conduct a Fasting Plasma Glucose Test (FPG) or an Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT). Either test can be used to diagnose pre-diabetes or diabetes. The American Diabetes Association recommends the FPG because it is easier, faster, and less expensive to perform.

With the FPG test, a fasting blood glucose level between 100 and 125 mg/dl signals pre-diabetes. A person with a fasting blood glucose level of 126 mg/dl or higher has diabetes.

In the OGTT test, a person's blood glucose level is measured after a fast and two hours after drinking a glucose-rich beverage. If the two-hour blood glucose level is between 140 and 199 mg/dl, the person tested has pre-diabetes. If the two-hour blood glucose level is at 200 mg/dl or higher, the person tested has diabetes.

## Get Ready for November – COPD Awareness Month

Do you know anyone who suffers from the following?

- Constant coughing, sometimes called "smoker's cough"
- Shortness of breath while doing every day activities

- Excess sputum production
- Feeling like you can't breathe
- Not being able to take a deep breath
- Wheezing

These are all symptoms of COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease); a serious lung disease that, over time, makes it hard to breathe. It is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. However, early detection and treatment of COPD can slow the disease and improve quality of life.

November is COPD Awareness Month. So take the opportunity to increase awareness and understanding of this disease and its risk factors in November and throughout the year.

To learn more about COPD, visit <http://www.LearnAboutCOPD.org>.

## Stress stealing years



Unrelenting stress takes a toll. Researchers say they can trace its effects right into cells. And they suspect it could shorten some people's lives.

The researchers checked cell parts called telomeres in people who care for patients with Alzheimer's disease. Telomeres essentially limit the number of times cells can divide, so they affect how cells age.

Researchers found caregivers' telomeres were more worn down than were telomeres of non-caregivers. They think this might explain other researchers' findings that caregivers are at significantly more at risk of sickness and death.

“So it's important to maintain family ties and friendship ties. That social support helps people buffer the stress of care-giving. The study in the Journal of Immunology was supported by the National Institutes of Health. Learn more at <http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat>

## Taking one for the family



Up to one in five people could get the flu in a given year. More than 200,000 could be hospitalized from complications, including about 20,000 children. About 36,000 people could die.

The flu is not just nasty. It's dangerous. And because it's infectious, if you get it, you can give it – even to the people you love.

At the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Jeanne Santoli says young children, the elderly, pregnant women and people with certain medical conditions can have big problems:

“Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones against influenza.”

The CDC says there could be a record of almost 132 million vaccination doses produced. The CDC says people shouldn't wait for flu season and see what happens.

[www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat](http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat)

## Soap Up!

### The 12 Germiest Places



#### 1. Your kitchen sink

Kitchen sinks are dirtier than most bathrooms. There are typically more than 500,000 bacteria per square inch in the drain alone. Plus your sponge, basin and faucet handles are crawling with bacteria as well.

**Reduce the risk:** Clean your kitchen counters and sink with an antibacterial product after preparing or cleansing food, especially raw fruits and vegetables, which carry lots of potential pathogens like salmonella, campylobacter and E. coli. Wash your hands as well with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds (long enough to sing “Happy Birthday”). Sanitize sponges by running them through the dishwasher's drying cycle, which will kill 99.9 percent of bacteria on them. As for the sink, clean it twice a week with a solution of one tablespoon of chlorine bleach and one quart of water. Scrub the basin, the pour solution down the drain.

#### 2. Airplane bathrooms

It may not be a shock that there are a huge number of germs in most public bathrooms, but experts agree the cramped and overused ones on airplanes are the worst. There are often traces of E. coli or fecal bacteria on the faucets and door handles because it's hard to wash hands in the tiny sinks. And the volcanic flush of the commode tends to spew particles into the air, coating the floor and walls with whatever had been swirling around in it.

**Reduce the risk:** Toilet seats are surprisingly clean, but use the paper cover when available. After using the

toilet, wash and dry your hands thoroughly, and use a paper towel to handle the toilet seat, lid, tap and doorknob. Put the lid down before you flush. If there's no lid, turn your back to the toilet while flushing and beat a hasty retreat.

#### 3. A load of wet laundry

Any time you transfer underwear from the washer to the dryer, you're getting E. coli on your hands. Just one soiled undergarment can spread bacteria to the whole load and machine.

**Reduce the risk:** Run your washer at 150 degrees (you can check the temperature of your washing-machine water with a candy thermometer) and wash whites with bleach (not the color-safe type; it doesn't pack the same punch), which kills 99.9 percent of bugs. Transfer wet laundry to the dryer quickly so germs don't multiply, wash underwear separately (there's about a gram of feces in every pair of dirty underwear) and dry for at least 45 minutes. Wash your hands after laundering.

#### 4. Public drinking fountains

Drinking fountains are bound to be germey, but school fountains are the worst, with anywhere from 62,000 to 2.7 million bacteria per square inch on the spigot.

**Reduce the risk:** Send your child to school with plenty of their own beverages and tell them to wash their hands throughout the day.

#### 5. Shopping cart handles

Saliva, bacteria and fecal matter are just a few of the substances found on shopping cart handles. Cart handles rank high on the yuck scale because they're handled by dozens of people

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every day and, of course, raw food carries nasty pathogens.

**Reduce the risk:** Many stores have dispensers with disinfectant wipes near the carts. If your store doesn't, bring your own wipes and give the handle a quick swab.

## 6. ATM buttons

If you're not careful, you might pick up more than quick cash from your local ATM. These buttons have more gunk on them than most public-bathroom doorknobs! ATMs aren't frequently cleaned, and are regularly touched — a perfect combination for a lot of germs.

**Reduce the risk:** Carry an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with you and rub it on hands after visits. Also be sure to do it after you handle paper money, which actually carries quite a few germs, too.

## 7. Your handbag

Recent studies found that most women's purses had tens of thousands of bacteria on the bottom and a few were overrun with millions. Another study found bugs like pseudomonas (which can cause eye infections) and skin-infection-causing staphylococcus bacteria, as well as salmonella and E. coli.

**Reduce the risk:** Instead of slinging your bag on the floor, hang it on a hook whenever possible — especially in public bathrooms — and keep your bag off the kitchen counter. Stick with leather or vinyl purses, which are typically cleaner than cloth.

## 8. Playgrounds

There's just no way to put this delicately: Children tend to ooze bodily fluids and then spread them around.

When researchers sampled playgrounds, they found blood, mucus, saliva and urine. Pair those findings with the fact that children put their fingers in their mouths and noses more than the rest of us, and it's easy to understand why Junior (and maybe his mom or dad) has the sniffles.

**Reduce the risk:** Carry alcohol wipes or hand-sanitizing gel in your purse, and clean everybody's hands a couple of times during a park visit, especially before snacking. Pick warm sunny days for outdoor play: The sun's ultraviolet light is actually a very effective disinfectant. Most bugs won't survive long on surfaces that are hot and dry.

## 9. Mats and machines at health clubs

Antibiotic-resistant staphylococcus has been found on yoga mats and cardio and resistance machines. At high schools, antibiotic-resistant-staph infections have been transmitted through wrestling mats. The same thing could happen at health clubs.

**Reduce the risk:** Wipe down machines with antibacterial wipes before working out. Bring your own yoga mat or cover a loaner with your towel. Shower after a workout and soap up your skin to rinse off any bacteria you may have been exposed to, as thorough washing gets rid of antibiotic-resistant staph.

## 10. Your bathtub

Shocking, but true: The place you go to get clean is quite dirty. A recent study found staphylococcus bacteria, a common cause of serious skin infections, in 26 percent of the tubs tested, as compared with just 6 percent of garbage cans. Tubs typically had more than 100,000 bacteria per square inch! You're washing germs and viruses

off your body and the tub is a fairly moist environment, so bacteria can grow.

**Reduce the risk:** Once a week, apply a disinfecting cleaner to the tub and actually *scrub*. Then you need to wash the germs down the drain with water and dry the tub with a clean towel. If you leave the tub wet, germs are more likely to survive. If someone who uses the tub has a skin infection, scrub it afterward with a solution of two tablespoons bleach in one quart of water.

## 11. Your office phone

This is enough to make you dial 911: Office phones often have more than 25,000 germs per square inch, and your desk, computer keyboard and mouse aren't far behind. Phones, including cell phones, can be pretty gross because they get coated with germs from your mouth and hands.

**Reduce the risk:** Simply cleaning your desk, phone and keyboard with a disinfecting wipe once in the middle of the day will kill 99.99 percent of the bacteria and viruses.

## 12. The hotel-room remote control

What's the first thing you do when you settle in at a hotel? You grab the remote control and switch on the TV — you, and the hundreds of other guests who've stayed there. How dirty is it? A recent study tested various surfaces for the cold virus after a group of sick people had stayed overnight and found the virus on the remote, door handles, light switches, pens and faucet handles.

**Reduce the risk:** Clean the remote control, phone, clock radio, door handles and light switches with germicidal wipes.

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## Recipe Corner: Cranberry Sauce



Once you've tasted homemade cranberry sauce, there's no going back to the canned stuff. And why not? With this recipe you can cut down on the non-nutritive sugar, while keeping all the taste. For those of you who think of cranberry sauce as simply delicious, know that it is naturally cholesterol-free, packed with Vitamin C, and also gives you a fair amount of dietary fiber and manganese.

This recipe makes just a modest amount of cranberry sauce, perfect for small get togethers and for people who don't know how to or don't want to can. If that doesn't describe you, just multiply all the quantities by 2-4 to make all the cranberry sauce you'd like.

*(Makes 3 cups)*

### Ingredients

- 2 cups fresh cranberries
- 1/2 cup apple or orange juice
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1/2 grated orange rind
- 1/2 cup of.... (see "Ideas" below)

### Directions

Mix cranberries, juice, and honey in a pot. Cook on low heat for about 5 minutes, until cranberries pop.

Remove from heat

Stir in orange rind and 1/2 cup of whatever you like (see below).

- Let cool at room temperature, then refrigerate or can.

### Ideas

People often add 1/2 cup of chopped pecans or walnuts to the cranberry sauce, but you can also use mixed dried fruit or not-so-dried fruit such as chopped up apricots, pineapples, or pears. Add whatever seems right for your taste and dietary needs.

## How To Stop Gaining Weight During The Holidays - 5 Tips



With the Holiday season fast approaching, you may have concerns about keeping those extra pounds at bay. It seems that even though the holidays themselves are only a few actual days, food is in abundance from Thanksgiving through New Year's, and temptation can be overwhelming. The following tips can help you survive the season with minimal damage.

### Keep the focus on family and friends

All too often, the emphasis is on the food rather than spending time with those we love. If you try to keep the focus on family and friends, this can help you shift mental gears and see the food as secondary.

### Eat Only Until You're Full

We've all heard this one before, but it bears repeating because it is so easy to overeat during the holidays. This includes not only the actual days, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's, but also in between. This is a season of leftovers, and tasty ones at that, which can make overeating easy. Make a conscious effort to monitor your level of fullness and stop when you start feeling full.

### Choose Your Parties Wisely

While it's tempting to accept every invitation, consider the long-term effects. Do you really need to attend every party that comes your way? Not necessarily. Yes, parties are great fun, but they are also an area where temptation is great and willpower is low. As your holiday invitations come rolling in, consider the ones that are important. It can be hard enough avoiding all the goodies that people bring to the office and well-meaning friends give for gifts; adding extra social gatherings only makes it harder to say no or to limit your intake.

## Focus on Your Long Term Goals

When you think about it, the holiday season is relatively short, even though it feels like it's a few months straight of nothing but eating. However, if you break it down, there's a manageable lull between Thanksgiving and Christmas, and even between Christmas and New Years. As you navigate the actual holiday days and your chosen parties, keep your long-term goals at the forefront of your mind.

### Keep your confidence up!

During the holiday season, with so much going on, it's very easy to throw your good eating habits and diet plans out the window for two months. Sweets and baked goods are constantly available, and it may just seem like too much to try to keep to your eating plans. However, throwing in the towel simply sets you up for failure. If you believe that it's pointless to try to eat well, then you probably will see those extra pounds creep on. Remind yourself that, with a little bit of planning, it is possible to make it through the season with minimal damage, but you do need a bit of confidence in yourself.

For information visit:

<http://ezinearticles.com/?How-To-Stop-Gaining-Weight-During-The-Holidays---5-Tips>

## They sense your fear



When you're afraid, can people notice? Research indicates there's a good chance, just by checking the whites of your eyes.

Eunice Yang of Vanderbilt found this when she had people detect obscured pictures of people with fearful, happy or neutral expressions. She says people were quickest to notice the fear faces.

Senior author David Zald says the viewers particularly pick up on the whites of eyes being wider in the fear faces. He thinks that could be biological – that other people's fear would indicate there's something around to be afraid of. For More information visit: <http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat/2007>