

Healthier Homes

Submitted by Charlie & Michelle Bubnis

Did you know that dryer sheets, air fresheners, scented laundry soap, scented cleaners and scented body lotion tend to have one thing in common? 95% of the chemicals used in these particular products contain artificial fragrance molecules derived from petroleum which have shown to pose human health risks.

The chemical fragrance industry is virtually unregulated. Full disclosure of the ingredients in their products is not necessary because these ingredients are considered "trade secrets". Because of this in 2005 the Food and Drug administration (FDA) issued a warning to the fragrance industry stating that the agency is serious about enforcing a law requiring companies to inform consumers that their products have not been safety tested.

Several of the common fragrance ingredients found in these products are:

- a) benzyl alcohol – a central nervous system (CNS) depressant.
- b) coumarin – animal carcinogen
- c) p- cymene – chronic effects: damage to lungs, liver, kidneys. Target organ: CNS
- d) diethyl phthalate – possible risk of congenital malformation of fetus, targets nerves
- e) musk ketone – increases carcinogenic effects of other materials. Found in blood, fat tissue and breast milk; crosses placenta/barrier.
- f) toluene – target organs: liver, kidneys, brain and bladder

Using fragrance free products for laundry and personal care products is an educated step towards making the home healthier for the entire family.

Try some of these easy less toxic options:

- Use free and clear laundry detergent
- Wash and dry cotton and synthetic products separately
- Add one half cup of vinegar to the wash cycle as a fabric softener
- Fresh fruit bowls for non-toxic fragrance in the house
- Use baking soda as a deodorizer
- Use fragrance free shampoo, conditioner, lotion and deodorant

Resources for more information:

- Environmental Health Network: www.ehnca.org
- www.cosmeticdatabase.com
- Less Toxic Alternatives, Carolyn Gorman, 2001
- Industry MSDS sheets



Cy Fair Project Prom

Project Prom is a drug-free and alcohol-free lock-in after the prom Friday, May 1 from 11pm to 6 am, May 2, 2009. This is a free, fun-filled evening for all seniors. The senior parents provide this all-night party with entertainment, games, activities, shows, food and prizes at the Sam Houston Race Park! It requires vast amounts of organization, planning, time, money and parental participation in order for it to be a success. We have had several fundraisers in order to reach our goal. Please visit our website to learn how you can support Project Prom. Each senior will use Project Prom Bucks to use in the prize raffles at Project Prom. They earn these PP\$ from their parent's participation all year long. There are many ways to earn PP\$ and to support Project Prom. Learn how at www.cyfairprojectprom.org.

Denim and Diamonds is our next big event and we hope you'll join us. Everyone is invited to this evening of dinner, dancing and auctions at the House Plantation on Friday, February 6th. Tickets are \$25 each. Please contact the co-chairs, Davetta Hammond at 281-213-3228 or Julia Garcia at jgarcia2@energyxxi.com for more information and to get your ticket.

Senior parents of Cy Fair High School, please join us for our next monthly meeting for Project Prom in the cafeteria at 7pm on Monday, January 12. See you there!

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Health & Safety

Are you tired of being tired? Fatigue can zap the energy, productivity, and pleasure right out of life. Try these fatigue-fighting tips to keep your energy level high:

Move more – Exercise stimulates circulation, and helps to release feel-good hormones in the body that improve mood and fight off fatigue.

Fuel up – Always eat a full breakfast, and maintain a healthy diet. Eat smaller, more frequent meals to help keep blood sugar levels balanced.



Drink more – Water, that is - Drinking water can help deliver all those nutrients you ingest to the right places, and flush out toxins that make your body weak.

Snooze more – Sufficient, quality sleep is necessary for your body to store up energy for the next day. Sleepless night? Catch a catnap the next day to help recharge.

Get all wet – Take an energizing shower to increase blood circulation. Alternate between hot and cold water (one minute each), ending with cold water.

Stress less – Build some downtime into your stressful day to unwind through exercise, meditation, listening to music, or whatever works for you. The better you handle your stress, the less likely you are to suffer from fatigue.

Helpful Hints

Spring is in the air, which means flowers, baseball games, barbecues, and diets to shed that "winter weight" before swimsuit season. Spring also means it's time for some home maintenance after a winter of neglect. So, muster up some motivation and use these simple tips to put the inside of your home in tip-top condition.

- Do yourself a favor and try out your air conditioning system before the first hot day; otherwise, there'll be a long, smoldering wait for an overbooked repairman. Change the filter, inspect hose connections, and make sure the drain pans are draining freely.
- Check and clean the clothes dryer exhaust duct and kitchen exhaust hood and filter.
- Vacuum the refrigerator coils and your refrigerator will run much more efficiently.
- Inspect, clean and test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Clean everything, top to bottom! Use non-toxic soaps for better indoor air quality.



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SUMMERWOOD

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Please help fill the Summerwood Newsletter with news of interest to Summerwood residents. If you have some information that you would like to have published in the newsletter, please visit our web-site: www.PEELinc.com. Articles and/or photos must be received by the 9th of the month for the following month's issue. (Advertising deadline is the 10th of the month.)

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Dishin' with... Molly Fowler



Light, Lean, & Healthy in the New Year

New Year's resolutions for healthier eating do not have to mean boring and tasteless meals. My tortilla soup is bursting with flavor but very little fat! Veggies are sautéed in pecan oil, which is lower in saturated fat than olive oil. Add green chiles, some herbs and spices, finish with oven-baked tortilla strips and you've got a soul-satisfying soup in minutes.

Molly's Tortilla Soup

Serves 4-6

1 Small	Onion, diced
3	Roma tomatoes, seeded and diced
	Pecan Oil *
1 4-oz can	Diced green chiles
1 10-oz can	Rotel tomatoes
2 Tbsp	Minced fresh cilantro
¾ Tsp	Ground cumin
¾ Tsp	Dried leaf oregano
4 Cups	Chicken or vegetable broth
	Oven-baked tortilla strips or chips**
	Salt and pepper to taste

Sauté onion and tomatoes in small amount of pecan oil in a saucepan until onion is almost translucent. (*Go to www.pecanoil.com for more information and retailers) Add green chiles and Rotel. Stir in cilantro, cumin, oregano, and chicken broth. Simmer for 10 minutes. Adjust seasonings if needed. Add cooked diced chicken or prepared taco meat to make more substantial. To serve: Place tortilla strips in bottom of bowl. Ladle soup over. Garnish with diced avocado, light sour cream, reduced-fat cheddar cheese.

**To prepare tortilla strips, preheat oven to 375°. Cut soft corn tortillas into thin strips. Place in a single layer on baking sheet (lightly spray with olive oil if desired) and bake in oven 10 minutes, or until crisp, stirring if needed.

Enjoy!

Molly

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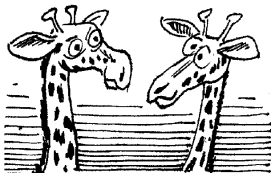
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Don't Stress – It's Just a Test

Baylor College of Medicine

HOUSTON – (Dec. 4, 2008) – When children complain about upset stomachs and headaches, it could be more than just the flu. This is the time of year when students are preparing for mid-term exams, and test anxiety could be causing their symptoms.

Anxiety about an impending test is a serious problem that can even make some students physically ill, according to a Baylor College of Medicine psychologist.

Test anxiety can be seen in students of all ages. Some will deal with it throughout their schooling because anxiety can be a genetic trait, said Dr. Megan Mooney, adjunct assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at BCM. Other students may be able to overcome their test anxiety, especially if parents respond to it in the right way, she said.

"If we respond by talking about being nervous and anxious as a normal thing and introducing techniques to cope with it, then test anxiety can be very manageable," said Mooney, also staff psychologist at DePelchin Children's Center and a counselor at River Oaks Elementary.

If, on the other hand, parents respond by letting their child stay home and avoid the test or by getting upset and reinforcing the feeling of nervousness, then test anxiety could become a longer-term condition.

Mooney works with students on relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, and on thought-stopping skills that get rid of negative thoughts that start creeping in at exam time.

"These techniques really need to be reinforced at home as well," Mooney said. "All of the skills to decrease the symptoms of anxiety should be practiced. It's just like learning how to play a sport – you have to practice over and over again so these techniques become a habit for children."

Parents must also be aware of the messages they are sending their children, Mooney said. Schools can be high-pressure settings where there is a lot of competition, and parents can add to the pressure with their own high expectations. Mooney urges parents to talk about the importance of kids' trying their best, rather than focusing on grades.

Students of all ages must also take care of their physical health at exam time by eating well and getting enough sleep. Older students also can help ease their anxiety by creating a schedule for themselves as soon as they receive their syllabus. They should find an optimal studying environment, whether it's a quiet library or somewhere they can have music playing.

While anxiety can be overwhelming if not properly dealt with, Mooney pointed out that it is a biological symptom that exists for a reason.

"When we experience anxiety, we get a burst of adrenaline that makes us more aware and helps us focus and concentrate," she said. "Having a little bit of anxiety about wanting to do well on a test can actually help motivate us."

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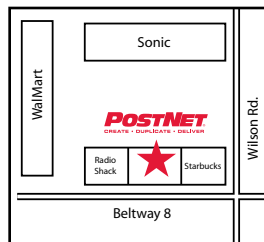


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Making Time For Exercise Is Easy

By now you know that exercise is good for you, and that you should do something on a regular basis. What's the best time for you to exercise? Anytime. Honestly.

For example, when you're sitting and watching TV, stretch your muscles. Never stretch so hard it hurts. Rather, stretch to the point of mild tension and hold the stretch for 10 to 30 seconds.

A healthy exercise program includes three kinds of exercise: aerobic activity, muscular strengthening and flexibility exercise. You can start your exercise program without investing in any elaborate equipment. For example, you can do simple exercises at home or at your desk at work, including sit-ups, push-ups and pull-ups.

For basic body weight exercises, weight-lifting equipment isn't required. Head for the kitchen and pick up the soup cans you have in the cupboard.

Aerobic activity can be fun

Aerobic activity is defined as prolonged continuous movement of large muscle groups. Translated, that means do something that keeps you moving. Ideally, do it for 20 minutes straight. If you don't have that much time, two 10-minute aerobic activity sessions will benefit you almost as much.

The good thing about aerobic activity is that it includes many of the sports you probably already enjoy. Walking, biking, hiking, dancing, swimming, even basketball are all examples of aerobic exercise.

Another good thing is that you can easily accomplish those two 10-minute sessions with things like taking the stairs instead of the elevator, walking around the neighborhood after work or parking your car farther away.

You could even turn shopping into an aerobic activity. Shopping is walking, so don't stop for 10 minutes straight and you've worked in one of your daily sessions! Check with your local mall for mall walker programs, and you'll have company.

Aerobic exercise is definitely good for cardiovascular health and fitness. And here's something else you'll like: Aerobic activity can help you lose weight.

Plenty of good exercise all around the house

If you do housework or yard work, you're doing yourself a favor. The stretching and lifting housework entails is good exercise. So is work you do outside. Yard work uses many muscle groups, especially activities like planting and working in the garden.

Raking uses your arm and back muscles. Digging gives your arms and legs a workout. And gardening provides a bonus: You'll have more fresh vegetables and fruits to add to your diet.

Is one time better than another to exercise?

It's really up to you. You can exercise in the morning, afternoon or evening. Lunch breaks offer an excellent opportunity to get out of the office and exercise. Use your coffee break to take a short walk around the office. Get rid of the day's stress by fitting in an exercise session after work.

Whatever time you choose, make sure you stick with it. For some people, it's easier to stay with an exercise program when you do it with a friend or co-worker.

Make time to stay healthy

Exercise is one of the best things you can do for yourself. If you're basically healthy, get going right now. If you're 40+ or have any health problems, consult your physician first.



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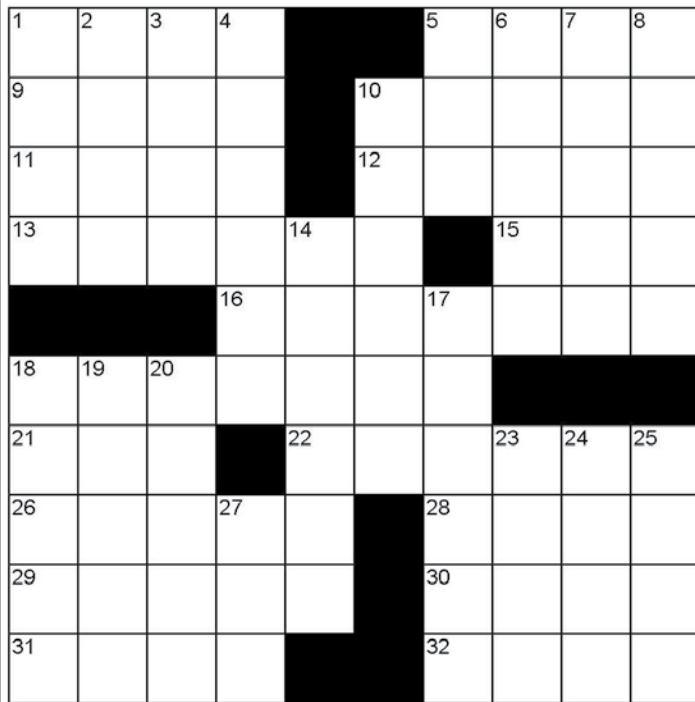


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ACROSS

1. What children learn
5. Island tree
9. Consider
10. Antiquity
11. Capital of Norway
12. Ancient Indian
13. Large shrimp
15. Past
16. Woman's saddle horse
18. Thrive
21. Free of
22. Farewells
26. Pearl
28. Rear
29. Common girl's name
30. Dunking cookies
31. As well as
32. Achy

DOWN

1. Famous cookies
2. Pear type
3. Fizz drink
4. High School dances
5. Brand of dispensable candy
6. Lord's table
7. Feudal superior
8. Star Trek Dr.
10. Scolded
14. Tropical fruit
17. Curly corn chips brand
18. First
19. Vie
20. Aromas
23. European monetary unit
24. Consumer
25. Oxford
27. Rio de Janeiro

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