

WOMEN'S HEALTH *Talk*



LOVE IS IN THE AIR

Legend has it that St. Valentine, a priest who lived in Rome during the 3rd century, performed secret wedding ceremonies against the decree of Emperor Claudius II, who had made marriage unlawful. It seems that bachelors were better warriors than were married men. The romantic that he was, St. Valentine would rather face death than deprive young men and women of wedded bliss.

Other stories surrounding the origin of Valentine's Day revolve around the selflessness of St. Valentine. One account cast him as a hero who showed God's love to Christians cast into Roman prisons by helping them to escape their fate of beatings, torture and death.

Perhaps the most personal story chronicles St. Valentine falling in love with a young woman who visited him in prison – possibly the jailer's daughter. He wrote love letters to her and signed them, "From your Valentine."

Source: *The History Channel*, www.history.com

Continued on page 3

CANCER AND SEXUAL INTIMACY: Are They Mutually Exclusive?

"I was so deep-down exhausted, I was beyond desire. I thought, 'This is gonna be permanent.' It wasn't. My husband never gave up, thank heaven." — Lila

Achieving sexual harmony can be a challenge in any marriage. Never more, however, than when one partner's life is threatened. When a diagnosis of cancer is given, simply surviving becomes the main focus.

Once treatment begins, the initial shock diminishes, and the determination to live and to return to a "normal" life usually prevails. Though not routinely discussed by doctors who treat cancer patients, continuing to maintain a healthy sexual relationship is possible during and after cancer treatment. If engaging in sexual relations was a pleasurable and comfortable part of life before the diagnosis of cancer, chances are it will continue to be. According to the American Cancer Society, the following may affect sexual intimacy after receiving a diagnosis of cancer and during treatment.

Desire

Life-threatening illness brings with it a gamut of emotions, and sexual relations often become a lower priority. Worry, depression, nausea, pain, fatigue – even distraction – can contribute to a loss of sexual desire, as do hormonal imbalances associated with chemotherapy or radiation treatments. Self-consciousness, or concern that a partner will be turned off by the bodily changes that often accompany cancer, can also create a lack of desire for sexual relations.

Pain

For women with cancer, pain is a prevalent cause for sexual inactivity. Changes in vaginal size or lubrication can result from pelvic surgery, radiation therapy or other treatment that affects a woman's hormones. Pain can cause vaginismus, or an involuntary tightening of the muscles surrounding the vagina, making penetration uncomfortable.

Premature Menopause

Cancer treatment can also be the cause of premature menopause, affecting a woman's sexual response. When natural menopause occurs, the symptoms are generally not as dramatic as when precipitated by surgery, chemotherapy or radiation. The loss of estrogen accompanied by the removal of ovaries as a part of cancer surgery can trigger "hot flashes" and vaginal atrophy. Chemotherapy or pelvic radiation may also usher in premature menopause. Hormone or androgen replacement therapy can assist in alleviating its affects.

Pelvic Radiation and Chemotherapy

If desired, a woman receiving radiation therapy can generally have intercourse during pelvic radiation treatment as long as she is not bleeding heavily from a tumor in her bladder, rectum, uterus, cervix or vagina. Following a doctor's advice on sexual activity during radiation treatment is

Continued on page 3

In This Issue...

• Looking Slimmer • Breastfed Infants • My Pyramid • Healthy Heart • When You Need to Go

LOOKING SLIMMER IN THE NEW YEAR

Is the number on the bathroom scale hovering in a neighborhood you have never visited before? While working on hitting your weight loss goals this year, you can still look your best. Try a few basic slimming techniques that can help you achieve the svelte look that you want before you actually get there.

Illusion is important when it comes to looking proportional, according to Rose Marie Tondl, extension clothing specialist for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institute of Agricultural and Natural Resources. She admits that few women have perfectly symmetrical features and it is possible to create optical illusions with the effective use of design lines as a means to appearing slimmer. "A change in the location of a line can change the apparent size of an area," she says. "Creating an illusion of height will compensate for a fuller figure." She recommends selecting outfits of one color and those with center front interest can add height.



Slimming Tips

Wear these to look slimmer:

- ◆ Long, narrow V or U necklines
- ◆ Narrow vest openings
- ◆ Narrow belts to match garment
- ◆ Long straight sleeves

All the clothing gurus agree – wearing monochromatic colors, especially in rich browns, burgundy or gray, will make you appear taller and slimmer as well as making a chic presentation. Beware of emphasizing the waistline. Longer blouses and single-breasted, unconstructed jackets with soft shoulder pads create the appearance of a smaller waist.

Wearing a longer, straight skirt or dress is better than a shorter, boxier cut for those who wish to camouflage a few pounds. Throw on a long jacket of a similar color, and voila! Mission accomplished.

Wearing the proper undergarments will also provide the sleek, slimming look you are trying to achieve. Women's Health Boutique carries a variety of minimizing and shaping foundations from Body Wrap, Goddess, Wacoal and other fine lingerie manufacturers. To find the nearest Women's Health Boutique or to order online, visit www.w-h-b.com.

Reaching out to women everywhere

BREAST-FED INFANTS LESS LIKELY TO BE OVERWEIGHT ADULTS

Study funded by baby formula council

The results of a study funded by the National Institutes of Health and the Infant Formula Council (now the International Formula Council) may point to breastfeeding as one of the best methods for curtailing obesity later in life. The subjects participated in formula studies more than two decades ago as infants. Now adults, the subjects who gained weight more rapidly during their first week

of life were more likely to be overweight. It seems that the first week may be a critical period for setting lifelong patterns for body weight.

Researchers from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Iowa are hoping to find ways to prevent obesity. Information obtained from this study, in combination with other studies, may help physicians to intervene in the lives of infants to curb obesity in later life.



According to the study's lead author, Nicolas Stettler, MD, a pediatric nutrition specialist at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, "Babies double their birth weight during the first four to six months. During the first week of life, however, a too-rapid gain in weight may increase the risk of future weight problems." Stettler noted that animal studies produced similar results, saying long-term obesity could result, "possibly from programming in the developing brain or the endocrine system."

Participants in the study all received infant formula. Stettler noted that exclusive breastfeeding during infancy is known to be associated with a slower rate of weight gain, and possibly with a lower risk of overweight in childhood and adolescence. The American Association of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding during a baby's first six months of life. Though he and his colleagues cannot make recommendations for targets for newborn weight gain, "We can certainly endorse breastfeeding," he says.

You can find a wide variety of breast pumps, nursing bras and accessories at Women's Health Boutique. Order online (www.w-h-b.com) or visit the nearest WHB.

Source: O&P Business News, www.oandpbiznews.com

MyPyramid

Tut-Tut: America's Obesity Epidemic

More than 60 million people, or 30 percent of American adults aged 20 years and older, are obese. In response to President Bush's Healthier US initiative, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released a new food guidance pyramid in 2005 that has undergone a change since it was first introduced in 1992. Instead of the traditional one-size-fits-all program known to most Americans, the new pyramid takes a more personalized approach, taking into account balancing individual activity levels and nutrition. MyPyramid was developed to give dietary guidelines and to make Americans aware of the vital health benefits of simple and modest improvements in nutrition, physical activity and lifestyle behavior.

The updated pyramid coordinates with Dietary Guidelines for Americans, also released last year, which offers authoritative advice for people two years of age and older about how proper dietary habits can promote health and reduce the risk of major chronic diseases.

The MyPyramid graphic is meant to encourage consumers to make healthier food choices and to be active every day. The color and widths of the bands symbolize variety, moderation and proportionality of the foods that should be eaten; the stairs symbolize how active a lifestyle



is led. The higher on the steps, the more physically active a person is, and the more fat and sugar that can be incorporated into the diet.

MyPyramid.gov contains interactive activities that make it easy for individuals to key in their age, gender and physical activity level so that they can get a more personalized recommendation on their daily calorie level and the foods that should be eaten. There are downloadable suggestions and worksheets to track daily food intake.

HEALTHY HEART, HAPPY HEART

What image comes to mind when we think of Valentine's Day? Hearts remind you of the ones you love, so include yourself in that category. Taking care of your heart to extend and enhance the quality of your life is the best way to say, "I love you" to family and friends.

◆ Cardiac Disease Assessment – Ask your doctor about your personal risk for heart disease and stroke. Follow her advice

for health testing and lifestyle changes.

◆ Smoking – Smoking doubles your risk of heart disease. Steer clear of secondhand smoke, too.

◆ Healthy Weight – Don't put a strain on your heart by carrying around excess weight. Control weight with proper diet and exercise.

◆ Diet – eating fruits, vegetables and whole grains will assist in staving off heart disease. Get no more than 20 to 35 percent of daily calories from fat.

◆ Cholesterol/Triglycerides – Your level of blood fats can determine your health. Monitor them and adjust them with the proper kinds of foods and medications if needed.

◆ Blood Pressure – High blood pressure raises your risk of heart disease. Regular exercise, proper diet, no smoking, limiting salt and alcohol, and taking the necessary medication can keep blood pressure at the appropriate levels.

◆ Diabetes – People who have diabetes are at greater risk for heart disease and stroke. Follow doctor's recommendations for keeping diabetes under control.

◆ Exercise – Consistent aerobic exercise such as brisk walking, swimming and biking strengthens the heart. Leisure walking, housework and gardening are also beneficial. Try to get in at least 30 minutes of activity each day.

◆ Stress – Take time to relax. Stress increases blood pressure.

For more information on preventing heart disease visit the American Heart Association Web site at www.americanheart.org

Continued from page 1

recommended. Radiation treatment derived from an implant in the affected area does not render the body radioactive once the implant is removed.

Chemotherapy patients generally experience decreased sexual desire due to the affects of the drugs. Upset stomach and weakness may leave little energy for a sexual relationship. Once the chemotherapy ends and the side effects fade, sexual desire often returns to normal levels.

Vicky Cosgrove was married nearly 20 years and had four children, ages 6 to 17, when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Yet after a year in which she had a bilateral mastectomy and reconstruction, chemotherapy and radiation, and began taking tamoxifen, she says her intimate life with her husband has never been better. "Maybe it has something to do with feeling that we shouldn't waste our time, maybe it's that I feel he's even more in tune with my needs," she says. "But he's just become a much more giving person."

Women's Health Boutique has prostheses, mastectomy bras and other products that meet the needs of women undergoing cancer treatment. Locate the boutique nearest you by visiting www.w-h-b.com.

Sources: American Cancer Society; Quotes used with permission from www.breastcancer.org.

Kiss Calories Goodbye

According to the 1991

Kinsey Institute New Report on Sex, a passionate kiss burns 6.4 calories per minute. Ten minutes a day of kissing equates to about 23,000 calories – or eight pounds – a year!

WHERE TO STOP WHEN YOU NEED TO GO

More than 33 million Americans have an overactive bladder, caused by involuntary spasms of the bladder muscle. For those who enjoy traveling, but who have an overactive bladder, the joy of seeing the sights can turn to dread.

Travel expert Arthur Frommer, with underwriting by Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation, has authored a guide,

Where to Stop & Where to Go: A Guide to Traveling with Overactive Bladder in the United States.

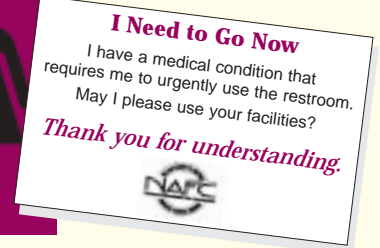
He experienced firsthand traveling

with an overactive bladder. "Needing to ask strangers about locating a restroom or trying to persuade a salesperson to give me access to their facilities – all while time is of the essence," says Frommer. "It quickly became clear that we could do a lot to alleviate stress and anxiety by getting those questions answered for people with overactive bladder."

The first-of-its-kind guide is offered free to the public and highlights restaurants, museums and other tourist attractions in 19 U.S. cities and four national parks, giving easy-to-follow restroom locations. A free copy of the helpful guide can be obtained by calling 1-877-STOP-GO-5 (1-877-786-7465) or by logging onto www.WheretoStopWhereToGo.com.

The Web site offers a downloadable "Stop & Go" card – a wallet-sized "bathroom pass" that offers people with overactive bladder a quick and easy way to explain their need for use of the restroom while traveling.

Source: Quality Care, The National Association for Continence



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