

In Good Health

Hay fever

Hay fever, also known as allergic rhinitis, is caused when a person breathes in something that they are allergic to. The most common hay fever causing allergens are pollens from trees, plants and grasses.



A runny nose (rhinitis) may also be caused by dust and dust mites, animal fur and skin flakes and cigarette smoke, however these allergies tend to be present year round, not seasonally, and are therefore not generally included as hay fever allergens.

Hay fever can occur any time of the year, but is often more prevalent during the autumn and spring seasons when the levels of triggering allergens, especially pollen, are higher.

Hay fever can affect anyone of any age, although according to the Children, Youth and Women's Health Service, occurrence tends to begin in the teenage years, with 20% of teenagers and young adults getting hay fever. It also seems that hay fever runs in families, as around 60% of people who get hay fever have others in their family with allergies such as hay fever, eczema and asthma.

The symptoms of hay fever can include a runny nose (with clear or cloudy mucus – yellow or green mucus would indicate an infection rather than hay fever), blocked nose or itchy nose, watery eyes, sneezing and a cough which is caused by mucus running down the throat. Due to these symptoms, those with hay fever may find it difficult to sleep and to concentrate.



There are several treatment options available for those who find their everyday lives being affected by hay fever. A corticosteroid nasal spray can help reduce the inflammation in the nose which causes stuffiness; they need to be used regularly, as directed, to be effective. The right eye drops can relieve the watery, itchy or swollen eyes associated with hay fever, and an antihistamine medication can be used to help control sneezing and itching. You should always consult your pharmacist when looking for medication for hay fever relief.

It is also important to get your symptoms checked by a doctor, especially if you have never had hay fever before, to be sure that it is not another problem (such as a virus or sinusitis) that is causing the symptoms.



Healthy Approaches to Dieting

Dieting is often associated with depriving yourself of certain foods, starving yourself or consuming only tiny portions of food – and generally these kind of diets don't last for long. Instead of taking extreme measures, it is best to establish a healthy approach to dieting that you can maintain throughout your everyday life and which will provide you with long term health benefits.



In order to have a healthy diet you need to eat a variety of foods from each of the five food groups. Different foods carry different nutrients and it is only by eating a large range that we can get all the different vitamins, minerals and nutrients our bodies need.

Remember for each of the food groups to make choices that will give you the most nutritional value, with the least amount of 'bad' (saturated) fats. For example, make sure your grain choices are wholegrain, your vegetable choices include a range of different coloured vegetables, your dairy choices are low in fat and sugar, your meat or protein sources are lean and that your oil and fat choices are 'good' fats (polyunsaturated and mono-unsaturated) such as those found in avocados and olive oil. Try to avoid heavily refined foods (such as white sugar and white flour) as the refining process removes most of the nutritional benefits.

The energy going into your body comes from the food and drinks you consume. Fat is the most concentrated source of energy, followed by protein and carbohydrates.



Energy out is the amount of energy you expend daily, both from metabolic processes (digestion, breathing, etc) and from your physical activities. Energy out is also measured in kilojoules.

So what happens if you take in more energy than you expend? The excess kilojoules will be stored as body fat. So it is important to make sure you are not eating too much.

Try reducing your portion size and adding extra veggies to your meals. Have a couple of healthy snacks during the day to keep you going; adding healthy snacks to your three main meals and eating smaller portions when you sit down to dinner can help you cut calories without feeling deprived.

Rather than leaping in and attempting to change the way you eat overnight, take small steps and make further changes as you adapt. Swap your white bread for whole grain, reduce the size of your dinner and cut down on fizzy drinks for a week; once you're comfortable with that, start making more changes. A healthy diet is not a fad; a healthy diet is for life.

You can introduce small changes to the way you eat and slowly make other changes as you adapt.

Benefits of Swimming

According to Swimming Australia, swimming is one of the most popular sports in Australia. With an abundant coast line and plenty of swimming pools available to the public, it is often a way of life for many Australians.

Swimming promotes strong bones and muscles, a healthy heart and lungs, improved coordination, better balance and greater flexibility.

Swimming provides an overall body workout and is great for cardiorespiratory fitness and endurance. Swimming is a great activity for those who are very overweight or who experience problems with their joints because the water supports your weight (there is a lot less pressure on your joints) and supports your body better than other activities.

The number of kilojoules you burn swimming depends on what stroke you use, how fast you swim, your swimming skills, and your body composition. When swimming you won't even realise you are sweating, so for many people it feels like an 'easier' work out. Many people also find swimming is a great way to relax and unwind after a busy day.

Stroke

Stroke, also called cerebrovascular disease, is Australia's second single greatest killer and a leading cause of disability (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2006). Stroke happens when the blood supply to the brain is disrupted; a disruption can occur when there is damage to an artery carrying blood to the brain, such as the artery breaking, bursting or becoming blocked.

The signs of stroke include:

Weakness, numbness or paralysis on one or both sides of the body

- Difficulty speaking or understanding
- Dizziness or loss of balance
- Loss of vision, blurred or decreased vision
- Severe and sudden headache
- Difficulty swallowing

The National Stroke Foundation promotes the FAST acronym to make the signs of stroke easier to remember and recognise. If you notice any of these signs call for an ambulance immediately.

The FAST test involves asking three simple questions:

- **Face** – Can the person smile, has their mouth or eyes drooped?
- **Arms** – Can the person raise both arms?
- **Speech** – Can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?
- **Time** – Act FAST and call 000 immediately for an ambulance.

A stroke may result in being unable to move limbs on one side of the body or the inability to speak or think clearly. A larger stroke may result in total paralysis on one

side, a coma or death due to extensive damage to the brain.

There are some risk factors for stroke which cannot be altered- as you get older your risk of stroke increases; stroke is more common in men; and stroke is more likely to occur in those with a family history of the disease. Those who have had a Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA) are also at increased risk of having a stroke, as these 'minor' strokes are often a warning sign of a major stroke.

Your overall lifestyle including diet and exercise will assist in maintaining healthy cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes and weight, all of which are risk factors for a stroke. Your doctor can discuss with you the best ways to improve your overall health and lower your risk of stroke.

To make sure you get the most out of your swimming:

- Remember that you need to warm up and stretch before swimming.
- Alternate strokes to work all your different muscle groups and to prevent boredom.
- Try to swim whatever stroke you are most comfortable with for 5 minutes without a break. Once you can do this, try 10 minutes without stopping. Once you can do that comfortably, increase your continuous swim length by 2 minutes every three sessions.
- Drink plenty of water before and after swimming to prevent dehydration.
- Combine swimming with other exercises, particularly weights and strength training exercises, to isolate and strengthen the muscles used most often in swimming (e.g. the shoulder joint).



Swimming is an inexpensive form of exercise readily available to most people; it tones and builds muscle strength, helps maintain a healthy weight and a healthy heart, and is a great way to relax. For those who are interested in learning how to swim, adult's and children's lessons are available through most local swimming pools or clubs.

What happens when you skip meals



Whether due to time restraints, needing to save money or in an attempt to lose weight, many people regularly 'skip' meals.

The problem with this is that the body gets hungry and being without food for long periods of time can cause cravings which lead to binges or an increase in meal sizes when the fast is broken.

Skipping meals also leads to low blood sugar, elevated fasting glucose levels and a delayed insulin response — conditions that can, in the long run, lead to diabetes.

When we don't give our bodies enough fuel (i.e. food), they go into 'starvation mode', slowing the metabolism and attempting to restrict the use of calories. In fact, people who skip meals typically burn calories 7 to 10% more slowly than those who don't (Life Clinic Health Management Systems).

As eating actually signals to the body's metabolism that it's time to get working, skipping meals prevents this boost and actually slows the metabolism down. It is therefore a bad idea to skip meals in an attempt to lose weight; a much healthier solution is to eat more smaller meals, spreading your daily calories throughout the day.

One of the most commonly skipped meals is breakfast, however this can be the most dangerous meal to skip. Breakfast literally 'breaks' the overnight 'fast' of having gone without food for as many as 12 hours. During this time the body's glucose levels drop, and the body compensates by releasing the glucose that has been stored in muscle tissue and liver, called glycogen.

Once all of the energy from the glycogen stores is used up, the body starts to break down fatty acids to produce the energy it needs. Without carbohydrates from foods, fatty acids are only partially oxidised, which can cause reduced energy levels.

According to the Better Health Channel, extensive research in Australia and overseas has found that skipping breakfast can diminish mental performance. In order to keep your body, and your brain, functioning at its best, you need to supply it with regular fuel in the form of healthy and nutrient rich meals.



Echelon Australia Pty Limited
ABN 96 085 720 056
T 1300 66 97 44
F 1300 66 97 55
www.echelonhealth.com.au

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

- Osteoporosis
- The Importance of Sleep
- Healthy Ageing
- Footwear for Healthy Feet

The information provided in this brochure is general guidance only and should not be relied on as a substitute for professional advice on any reader's personal circumstances. No liability will be accepted for losses resulting to any reader due to relying solely on this publication.