

MARCH 2014 VOL. 6 ISSUE 6

## QUITTING SMOKING

*Gustave Weiland, VCU School of Medicine*

Have you thought about not smoking? Smoking can lead to many health problems. Smoking is the number one cause of **ALL** illnesses that can be prevented. It can cause cancers, lung disease, and heart disease. It can cause death. Smoking can also make others sick. Pregnant women can hurt their baby if they smoke.

It is not easy to stop smoking, but many have quit.

More people have quit than are current smokers. The nicotine in tobacco makes it hard to quit. Without enough nicotine, a smoker can become easily upset, anxious, stressed, and gain weight. Tobacco smoke contains other poisons that can hurt you.

Doctors, group and individual counseling sessions can help you quit. Medications can also help you quit.

**1-800-QUIT-NOW is open 24/7.** They have resources and one-on-one counseling.



## YOUTH & VIOLENCE PREVENTION

*Angelica De Jesus, VCU School of Allied Health*

Safe communities are important. They can help kids grow to be healthy adults. This means putting an end to youth violence.

Youth violence is a serious problem. It can hurt kids and our communities. Kids who face violence are more likely to miss school and abuse drugs. They are also more likely to face depression and anxiety.

Violence can happen in classrooms or at work. It can also happen in our neighborhoods. Some examples of violence are:

- \*bullying
- \*cyber bullying

- \*teasing
- \*fighting
- \*name-calling

One of the best ways to stop violence is to talk about it before it happens. It is important that children learn to be kind and respectful to others at an early age. Learn to manage conflict by talking problems out. It is an important way to stop violence among children. Share what you know with kids. Ask them questions. This can help them speak out against violence for themselves and others.

For more information check out the CDC website for youth violence <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/index.html>. You can also ask someone who works your child's school or youth community center.

## SLEEP AWARENESS

*Blake Steele, VCU School of Medicine*

Do you ever find yourself half way through the day and you start yawning so much you can barely pay attention to what you are doing? Being well rested can have a major impact on your health. Sleep is important in many ways. School-aged children should get around 10-11 hours of sleep. Teens should get 8.5-9.5 hours. Adults should get around 7-9 hours of sleep each night. If you are not sleeping enough, try to make changes to your daily routine to get close to your recommended amount of sleep.

Please see your doctor if you are having problems getting to or staying asleep. Many factors can cause these problems. Caffeine and exercise too close to bedtime can keep you awake. Alcohol before bed can cause you to awaken only a few hours after going to sleep. Stress and depression can keep you from sleeping. Exciting TV programs can

*cont. on back*

make getting to sleep difficult. Prepare for bedtime by relaxing before you try to go to bed.

Getting the right amount of sleep can lower stress levels and improve mood. It also helps maintain a healthy body weight. It can improve athletic performance. Sleep can also help you stay focused and remember things better at work or school. For your health and your happiness, start going to bed a little earlier.

## VITAMINS

*Scott Rose, VCU School of Medicine*

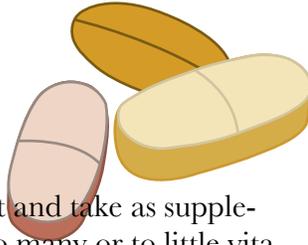
The amount of vitamins you eat and take as supplements needs to be just right. Too many or too little vitamins can make you sick. Please inform your doctor if you are taking extra vitamins. Vitamin deficiencies can happen in the U.S. Pregnant women may need more folate. Those that drink alcohol may need more vitamins. You may be at higher risk for a vitamin deficiency if you get very little sun. If you are elderly or a vegan you should also see your doctor. If you had gastric bypass surgery, you may also be at higher risk. Dialysis patients should check in with their doctors.

Stay healthy with a healthy diet. Foods that are good for you include:

- \*Low-fat yogurt, eggs
- \*Salmon, lean beef, chicken, turkey
- \*Collard greens, kale, mustard greens, spinach
- \*Bell peppers, brussel sprouts
- \*Melons, raspberries, strawberries
- \*Dried beans (chickpeas, kidney, navy, black, pinto), lentils, peas
- \*Oats, quinoa, brown rice
- \*Almonds, cashews, peanuts
- \*Seeds (flax, pumpkin, sesame, sunflower)

Some common signs of nutrient deficiencies:

- \*Trouble seeing at night
- \*Cracked lips, especially near the corners of the mouth
- \*Muscle twitches
- \*Bone fractures
- \*Confusion/ memory problems
- \*Constant tiredness, difficulty concentrating



## YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

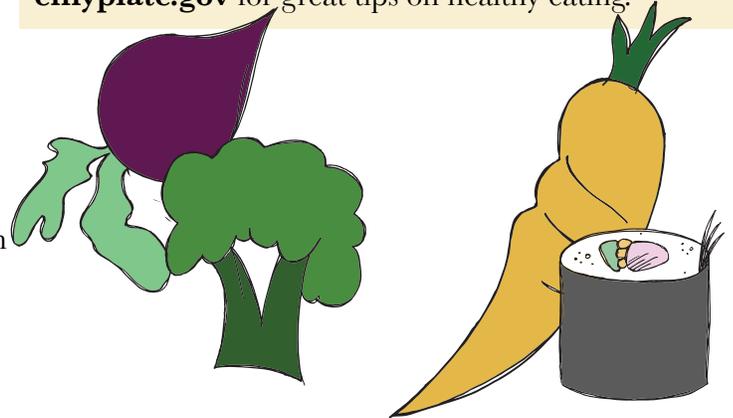
*Neal Gupta, VCU School of Medicine*

The food you eat affects your health. Most Americans eat too much fat and sugar. On the other hand, our diets lack important nutrients like fiber. A poor diet can lead to obesity, which can increase your risk of many chronic diseases. If you want to improve your diet, you can follow some simple steps. Your diet should include 6-8 servings of fruit and vegetables per day. Your lunch and dinner plate should be half fruit and vegetables. One serving is equal to one cup.

At all meals, try to eat less. Savor your meal slowly and eat smaller portions. Vegetables should be the main part of every meal. Fresh fruit makes a great dessert. Always choose whole grain over other grains. Whole grains tend to have more nutrients and fiber. You can spot whole grain bread and rice in the supermarket by their label. All these foods will leave you feeling full and provide important nutrients.

You may want to cut down on junk foods, too. Soda and juices are made with lots of sugar. It is better to drink water instead. Milk is full of nutrients, but avoid drinking whole milk because it is high in fat. Skim milk makes a great substitute. Protein is important but not in excess. Try eating seafood instead of poultry or red meat. Meat should be lean or low fat. Most deli meats contain too much fat and salt, so eat those less often. Remember you can consume protein from other sources, too. Eggs, beans, nuts, and peas all contain protein. Protein from plants, like peas and beans, are great sources of protein because they are low in fat and high in fiber.

If you want more information, log on to [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) for great tips on healthy eating.



**IH** is a collaborative student organization of professional students from Virginia Commonwealth University who provide health education and outreach in the community.

**PA**

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