

To Your Health!

By Judy Hargis, P.A., and Audeen Wagner



Oh Those Winter Blues !!

Many people experience "winter blues". Shorter days, longer nights and lower temperatures can trigger feelings of depression, lethargy and fatigue. Some people find themselves eating and sleeping more. This can be a more serious problem for some individuals who develop seasonal affective disorder or SAD. SAD is a type of depression. Onset occurs usually in late fall or early winter. It is a cyclic, seasonal condition that is not well understood. Symptoms usually come and go about the same time every year. It may

start with mild symptoms and become more severe as the season progresses. It can seriously impair the lives of those affected. Women tend to be diagnosed more often than men, but men tend to have more severe symptoms. Symptoms improve with warmer, sunnier weather. The symptoms of SAD can include feelings of depression, hopelessness, loss of energy, social withdrawal, loss of interest in activities normally enjoyed, appetite changes, weight gain and difficulty concentrating and processing information.

The specific causes of SAD are not well understood. Studies have looked at things such as northern locations and family history, with mixed results. It is thought that genetics, age and, most importantly, chemical make-up all play a role in developing SAD. Diagnosis depends on whether you have experienced depression and

other symptoms for at least two consecutive years during the same season and the periods of depression have been followed by periods without depression. Also, that there are no other explanations for the changes in your mood or behavior.

Treatment in milder cases can be spending more time outdoors or sitting closer to bright windows while at home or work. Treatments for more severe cases can include light treatment, antidepressants and psychotherapy. Light therapy can mimic outdoor light and cause brain changes that can lift your mood. In light therapy you sit a few feet away from a specialized light therapy box so that you are exposed to very bright light. It is generally easy to use and has few side effects. Antidepressants used to treat depression and anxiety can sometimes be effective in treating SAD. Psychotherapy can give you tools to help you manage symptoms and cope with stress. It is important to talk to your doctor or healthcare provider to determine if you have SAD and decide on an appropriate treatment plan for you.

There is no known way to prevent SAD, but you can take steps to manage and minimize symptoms. These include things like making your home sunnier and brighter, getting outdoors on sunny days, regular exercise, getting enough rest, eating a balanced diet, practicing stress management, socializing, and taking a trip to a sunnier, warmer location. It is important to take these steps early and stick to your plan. This can prevent symptoms from getting worse over time.

The most important thing is knowledge and awareness of how you are feeling. It is important to talk to your healthcare provider. They can determine whether your symptoms are from winter blues, SAD or a major depression, and help you get appropriate treatment. For more information on SAD go to: www.NAMI.org, or www.webmd.org.

As always, feel free to contact To Your Health! c/o The Independent, 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064, or email us: health@the-independent.net.

Tips given to cut fat in holiday cooking

Some holiday changes are harder to hide than others. For instance, if the traditional 12 Days of Christmas were suddenly reduced to the Six Days of Christmas, we'd all notice. It's easy to make subtle changes in holiday food preparation, especially in recipes that use high-fat ingredients such as butter or whipping cream. Over time, repeated with consistency, those subtle changes become delightfully obvious as healthy eaters lose weight.

Fat has more than twice the calories of other foods, according to Ann Ruelle, RD, CD, CLSC, registered dietitian, educator and nutrition consultant for TOPS Club, Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), the original weight-loss support organiza-

tion. Ruelle says it makes sense to curb fat in daily diets when controlling calories to achieve or maintain weight loss.

TOPS offers a few cooking tips from Ruelle to get healthy eaters through the holidays.

For starters, instead of using 1 cup of butter when cooking or baking, use 1/2 cup of butter plus 1/2 cup of applesauce, other fruit sauce, or baby food. However, Ruelle cautions, if cooks replace all butter in a recipe with puréed fruit, they will sacrifice taste, texture, and appearance. Some flavor ideas to consider – prune puree pairs well with chocolate, spice and carrot cakes; mashed bananas work nicely in carrot or banana cake or muffins.

Also, one cup of whipping cream can be replaced in one of three ways:

- 1 cup of very cold skim milk whipped with 1 tablespoon of

flour,

- 1 cup of very cold whipped evaporated skim milk, or

- 1/2 cup of low-fat yogurt mixed with 1/2 cup of low-fat, salt-free cottage cheese.

To replace cream in cream soup, Ruelle suggests thickening with mashed potatoes or cooked rice. First, blend the potatoes or rice with a little soup and then stir the mixture back into the soup pot; it will have a great texture without the guilt.

To replace 1 cup of sour cream, mix 1 cup of low-fat cottage cheese with 2 tablespoons of skim milk and 1 tablespoon of lemon juice, or simply use fat-free sour cream, Ruelle says.

TOPS, the nation's oldest, nonprofit weight-loss education and support organization, is celebrating 60 years of weight-loss support and success in 2008. Founded and headquar-

Please see page 24

How to keep worry under control

by the American Counseling Association

If there's one thing most of us are not lacking, it's opportunities to worry. From economic problems to family issues to our health, there's an endless list of things that can cause worry.

Worrying about real things in our lives it isn't always bad, though not very enjoyable. Being worried performs a needed function, getting us to focus on an issue and, hopefully, to take action.

But we can also suffer from needless worry. This is worry about things that are imaginary or out of our control. Such worry is harmful as it raises stress levels, yet comes from things we can do nothing about.

Excessive worry is not only unpleasant and stressful, but can lead to very real health issues. Worrying stimulates our bodies to produce various chemicals, such as adrenaline, that cause physiological reactions, such as muscle tension, increased blood pressure and higher heart rates.

The physical reaction to constant worry can result in headaches, back pain and stomach problems. There's evidence it also affects our immune system, leaving us more vulnerable to viruses and bacteria, and perhaps even cancer, and appears to increase

the risk of heart attack and strokes.

So how can you reduce worry in your life? Start by analyzing how real the source of your worrying is. If it's something over which you have control and can do something about, then channel your worry into action. Develop a plan for dealing with the cause of your worry, then carry it out.

If your source of worry is outside your control, it will continue to cause you emotional and physical problems without allowing you a way to deal with the problem.

Your goal is to stop such needless worry before it takes control of your emotions. One way is to rechannel your thoughts. A simple diversion, such as music, reading, talking to a friend or getting some exercise, can often help. It takes practice to refocus your thoughts away from needless worry, but it can be done.

Once the worry is under control, then think about how real the source of that worry is and whether it's something you might better ignore, rather than letting it control you.

If you find that chronic worry, especially over things you can't control or influence, is negatively affecting your life, consider talking to a counseling professional who can offer a variety of ways to help reduce the worry in your life.

Terry's Gym

A COMPLETE CO-ED GYM FACILITY

(503) 429-0501
16720 Noakes Rd Vernonia, OR

★ **GASOLINE ALLEY AUTO WRECKING** ★

503-429-7581

Most parts under warranty
Open Tuesday-Saturday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
Closed Sunday and Monday

54372 Nehalem Hwy South, Vernonia, OR 97064
6 miles south of town on Hwy 47

Buying unwanted vehicles with clear title