

# healthmatters

Winter 2014

## Genetics and Illness: What's Your Fate?

IF YOU HAVE A PARENT OR SIBLING WITH HEART DISEASE, cancer, or another serious and possibly inherited condition, does that mean you are doomed to the same fate? Growing volumes of research explain the role that genes—the inherited material that forms your body's blueprint—play in some diseases. Often, your lifestyle and environment—including what you eat and breathe—can combine with disease-prone genes to make a potential disease a reality.

### KNOW YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Being aware of your family history tells you about what diseases you may be at special risk for and gives you a chance to delay or control them. Researchers think most cancers, for example, result from 'two hits.' You inherit one normal gene from one parent and one cancer gene from your other parent. There are two major types of cancer genes: oncogenes and tumor suppressor genes. You might have one type of cancer gene, but your normal gene protects you from cancer. If lifestyle and environmental factors knock out the normal gene, you may develop cancer.

### IMPROVING THE ODDS

There are things you can do to help your body's efforts to undo any genetic damage:

- Eat a low-fat diet.
- Get plenty of exercise.
- Don't smoke or use other types of tobacco.
- Avoid or limit alcohol to no more than one drink a day for a woman or two drinks a day for a man.

That's good advice for anyone. But it's particularly true if you have a family history of certain ailments, such as heart disease, certain cancers, and diabetes. It's even truer if close relatives developed those diseases at a young age.

Follow your doctor's recommendations for health screenings that could determine your risk and detect warning signs or the early stages of a disease.



Bermuda Cancer and Health Centre provides state-of-the-art technology for screening and diagnostic tests. For more information, call **236-1001** or visit online at [www.cancer.bm](http://www.cancer.bm).

# Dinnertime Should Be Family Time

MEALS GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO DISCUSS WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE, and give parents a chance to pay attention to their children. How can you make the most of this time?

## TURN OFF THE TV

Children might be thinking that talking with Mom or Dad isn't fun. Watching TV, going online, or playing a video game sounds more exciting.

But kids who spend a lot of time doing these things miss out on talking with their parents. They may eat more junk food. Plus, they don't get enough exercise if they're always sitting in front of a TV or computer screen.

For adults, realize that it's healthier to turn off the electronics at dinner. Mute your cell phone. And try not to get up and down from the table. You might be surprised by how much you like talking and hearing about everyone's day once these distractions are gone.

## MAKE MEALS FUN

You can all learn to enjoy family meals even more with these tips:

- Decorate paper place mats. Before dinner, draw a funny picture or write a silly poem on each person's

place mat. Then share the laughs when they come to the table.

- Get the conversation rolling. Each night, have one family member pick a fun question for everyone to answer. It can be serious. ("Who's your hero and why?") Or it can be lighthearted. ("Which vegetable would you rather be and why?")
- Talk about your day. Tell your family about something that made you smile or wonder.
- Be positive and polite. Don't argue or criticize. That will just ruin everyone's appetite. And don't hog the conversation. Let everyone have a chance to talk.



## health hint

# Q&A



## How Do I Help Someone Who Is Choking?

**A:** The Heimlich (hîm / lik) maneuver is used to help a person who is choking on food or an object. Knowing how to do it can help you save a family member or friend. Learn the steps here:

1. If you think a person is choking, first ask if he or she is choking. If the person cannot answer, call your emergency phone number. Then begin the Heimlich maneuver. If the person can cough, speak, or breathe, do not do anything.
2. To perform the Heimlich maneuver, first stand behind the person.
3. Wrap your arms around the person's waist.
4. Make a fist with one of your hands. Place the thumb side of your fist between the person's belly button and bottom rib.
5. Place your other hand over your fist.
6. Keeping your elbows out, press your fist into the person's stomach with a quick upward jerk. Continue this until the object comes out.

## health hint

**Chocolat Chaud** This is one of the ways the French make it. Choose a premium chocolate for the best chocolat chaud. **Prep Time:** two minutes | **Cook Time:** five minutes | **Total Time:** seven minutes

### Ingredients

6 oz. chopped semisweet chocolate  
 ¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons hot water, divided  
 3 cups hot milk  
 Sugar, to taste  
 Whipped cream  
 Chocolate curls

### Preparation

Using a double boiler or a heat-safe glass bowl over simmering water, melt the chopped chocolate into ¼ cup of the water. Stir in the 3 tablespoons hot water and milk until the chocolate mixture is smooth. Pour the hot chocolate into cups and add sugar as desired. Garnish each cup with a spoonful of whipped cream and a few chocolate curls.

—Courtesy of the Smithsonian Libraries

MAKES 4  
SERVINGS



# Natural Choices for Household Cleaning

PRODUCTS THAT CONTAIN HARSH CHEMICALS LIKE BLEACH AND AMMONIA can irritate skin, nasal passages, and lungs, and can be dangerous if mixed with other products or used improperly.

## EFFECTIVE YET CHEAPER

Cleaning your home with nontoxic or natural alternatives such as vinegar, baking soda, and even salt can cost less and be just as effective. For example, instead of using a corrosive commercial oven cleaner, pour salt on fresh oven spills and scrape residue off after the oven cools. Use a pumice stick, available at hardware stores, on tough oven stains.

To find more natural or less hazardous cleaners, look on the label for signal words—poison, danger, warning, or caution—that indicate how hazardous the product is. Buy

cleaners with no signal words or choose those marked with the less serious signal words warning or caution. Always follow label instructions for safe use, storage, and disposal.

## READ INGREDIENT LISTS

You may be curious about what to look for on a cleaning product label. Compare ingredient lists. Choose water-based cleaners rather than those with petroleum solvents. You also can use baking soda or borax to clean your toilets.

Manufacturers are now required to state if a product is hazardous. If the product label doesn't list ingredients, you can check the Web site [householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov](http://householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov) to learn about ingredients, potential health effects, and the safety of various household products.

## health hint

### Everyday Ways to Boost Immunity

Read on for ways to raise defenses against germs for your entire family.

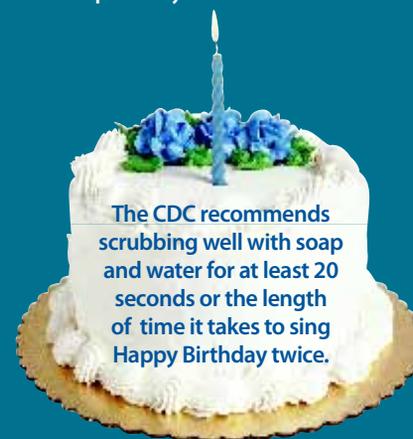
**Get your ZZZs.** Not sleeping enough may raise the risk for infections. During sleep, your body produces more natural disease fighters and sends them where needed. For most adults, seven to eight hours does wonders.

**Don't get burned.** Sun damage weakens the immune system.

**Eat for health.** Eating a balanced diet can keep a vital part of the immune system healthy—the skin. Skin protects the body against microorganisms, radiation, and other damage. Experts recommend plenty of fruits, veggies, and fatty fish to keep skin healthy. In addition, yogurt has been shown to boost some aspects of the immune system. Yogurt with live active cultures contains bacteria that may activate immune cells throughout the body.

**Beat stress.** Stress makes you more likely to catch colds.

**Come clean.** Washing your hands is the simplest way to avoid colds.



## Make a Plan with Wellness Matters!

Plot your healthcare strategy with BF&M's free one-stop portal exclusively for health insurance members, Wellness Matters! Start with [www.bfm.bm](http://www.bfm.bm) and click links to:

- Gain insight with "Interactive Tools."
- Take a Health Risk Assessment.
- Search the Drug Reference Guide.
- Test your breast cancer knowledge.
- Get breaking health news in one place.
- Analyse your understanding of stress.
- Benefit from tips on physical fitness.
- Reduce risk for cardiovascular disease.
- Get proactive against diabetes.
- Start cooking with healthy recipes.

# Seven Ways to De-Stress Your Next Family Vacation

VACATION STRESS may sound like a contradiction in terms. But any kind of change—even a fun one—can trigger stress. Add children to the mix, and you have a recipe for more work than relaxation. Some preplanning can help keep everyone smiling.



## PLANNING WITH CHILDREN

Start out by involving older children in decisions about where to go and what to do on vacation. Be sure to plan fewer activities than you think you have time for. Rushing to reach a destination or catch a plane can add unwelcome stress to your family vacation. You also want to schedule time for stress-busting naps and exercise along the way.

Let kids be kids. Plan at least one child-oriented activity a day, such as a visit to the zoo. For travel and downtime, bring a 'fun bag' stuffed with favorite snacks, books, games, and other items your kids enjoy.

Try to keep to a daily routine as much as possible. Children are reassured by structure and predictability. That includes making sure they get enough sleep and relaxation time. Otherwise, children can get burnt out or cranky.

## KEEP ON MOVING

Taking a truly stress-busting break is well worthwhile. Consider planning for both physical activity and relaxation. Here are some ideas to get your entire family moving on vacation:

- Find a beach where you can walk for miles, swim, or snorkel, or try sea kayaking.
- Take a trip to a river for white-water rafting or canoeing.
- Make a mountain your destination for hiking or biking.
- Vacation in a historic city and walk from one place to the next.

## Resources for Action

Is your interest spiked by a health topic? Start your journey with these resources or visit the "BF&M Resources Guide" section of our Online Wellness Centre at [www.bfm.bm](http://www.bfm.bm).

**Bermuda Asthma and Allergy Relief Centre**  
46 Bermuda Centre  
55 Dundonald St.  
Hamilton HM 10  
292-9258

**Bermuda Cancer and Health Centre**  
P.O. Box HM 1562  
Hamilton HM FX  
236-1001  
[www.cancer.bm](http://www.cancer.bm)

**Hamilton Health Centre**  
Offers immunizations.  
67 Victoria Street  
Hamilton HM 12  
236-0224

**Government of Bermuda, Department of Health**  
278-6460  
[www.health.gov.bm](http://www.health.gov.bm)

[www.bfm.bm](http://www.bfm.bm)

## BF&M Overseas Healthcare Toll-Free Helpline

BF&M Medical Assistance is available 24/7 with our toll-free numbers:

- 1-888-674-1367 (from Bermuda)
- 1-877-236-2338 (from outside Bermuda)
- 1-519-251-5186 (from Bermuda collect calls)
- 1-519-251-5185 (from outside Bermuda: collect calls)

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## BF&M Wellness Matters!

Online Wellness Centre  
[www.bfm.bm](http://www.bfm.bm). Just click Wellness Matters

 Scan the image with your smartphone to meet us on Facebook for hot news, policy info, and events.



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