Eve Lees authored a ‘health tips’ column in *The Province* newspaper (Vancouver) in 2002, until it discontinued its health feature page. Shown here are some of those tips . . .

It's good *and* good for you

What is it about chocolate? Here are some of the theories behind why so many of us, especially women, are chocoholics.



Caffeine: The average chocolate bar supplies only 10 to 20 mg of caffeine compared to 150 mg in a cup of coffee but this may be enough to affect mood for some chocolate lovers, especially if they aren't regular caffeine users.

Phenylethylamine: This substance in chocolate also occurs naturally in the brain and may have a role in emotional arousal. This may be why you crave chocolate when feeling low.

Theobromine: This stimulant in chocolate may elevate mood the same way caffeine can.

Anandamide: Another substance in chocolate that is also produced in the brain, this can activate the same areas of the brain that marijuana does — but to a much lesser degree. It would actually take close to five pounds of chocolate to "get high."

Carbohydrates: Chocolate contains sugar, a simple carbohydrate. This causes the release of seratonin in the brain, which has a calming effect.

Nutritional deficiences: We need 240 mg of magnesium a day and cocoa is a rich source of magnesium. So are wheat germ and fresh veggies, of course but face it, chocolate tastes really good.

Allergies: Some health experts believe people crave foods they are allergic to, and chocolate is a common allergen and migraine trigger.

Psychologically soothing: For many people, chocolate is simply a comfort food, associated with happy times and memories.

— **Source: Locally-based, Canada-wide Personal Health Newsletter, go to www.artnews-healthnews.com**

Look good, feel better

Echinacea and goldenseal are popular herbal remedies for colds and the flu but there are many others. Stock your medicine cabinet with a variety of herbs for cold and flu season.

■ Astralagus: Has immune-boosting and antiviral properties and can be taken longterm, unlike echinacea.

■ Elderberry: The berries from the Elderberry tree have compounds which interfere with the ability of the flu virus to penetrate cell membranes. Take as capsules, tincture of tea.

■ Garlic: Boosts the immune system and kills or incapacitates fungi, bacteria, yeast and parasites. Also highly effective against viruses that cause the cold or flu.

■ Lemon balm: Fights many types of bacteria and some viruses. This herb has a flavourful minty lemon taste. Use as capsules or tea.

■ Peppermint: Helps clear clogged nasal passages and relax the airways. Drink as a tea or put a few drops of the oil on your pillow or in your bathwater, or rub on temples (avoid your eyes!) or inhale the steam of hot water with added drops of peppermint oil.

— **www.artnews-healthnews.com**

Feel better, look better

Light exercise boosts immunity

Novice exercisers starting an exercise program are boosting their immune system if they begin with light physical activity. A study at the University of Toronto found light training has the strongest protective effect for the immune system, with a greater increase in specific killer white cells. Moderate training was less effective overall. Intense or moderate levels of exercise can actually reduce the positive B cell count in beginners. This has a negative effect on the production of viral antibodies. This means the long-held belief about exercise is true: taking it slow and easy is the best recommendation when starting an exercise program.

— **Eve Lees, editor, Personal Health Newsletter, www.artnews-healthnews.com**

Feel better, look better

Take a deep breath. You'll be amazed at the calming effect of this simple technique.

Often we become so busy and engrossed with our tasks we take shallow, short and fast breaths instead of slow, deep ones. As well, during physical or emotional stress, breathing becomes rapid and shallow. Breath-holding limits the amount of oxygen coming into your lungs and, over time, your good health may be compromised.

Deep breathing:

■ Can return your oxygen levels to normal and improve oxygen intake efficiency.

■ Relaxes muscles, dilates blood vessels and returns your body to a healthy balance.

■ Improves energy levels.

■ Can improve ability to deal with stress.

■ Helps you focus your attention on proper breathing when you do it during such exercises as yoga or stretching. This way you are more likely to breathe properly when you aren't thinking about it.

— **Eve Lees, editor, Personal Health Newsletter, www. artnews-healthnews.com**

Feel better, look better

Spend some time by yourself — even if it's just a few minutes a day. Quiet time is an effective stress reliever and helps energize mind and body in many ways. Try to clear your mind of current problems or worries.

To help you keep your mind clear, put your feet up and spend at least 10 minutes doing one of these: Concentrate on your breathing, focus on relaxing the muscles of your body, listen to soothing music, or listen to relaxing sounds such as ocean waves, a waterfall or a bird singing. Spend longer if you can, perhaps 30 minutes or up to an hour — or a whole afternoon — walking in the woods.

— **Personal Health Newsletter, www.artnews-healthnews.com.**

Feel and look better

The easiest way to lower the fat in your diet (and your body) is to cut back on "convenience" foods. KFC's Popcorn Chicken, large, provides 1,170 calories, a Burger King Whopper with Cheese, 780 calories and Subway's Reuben Sandwich 920. Here are a few lower-fat choices:

■ Taco Bell grilled Chicken Soft Taco, 210 calories

■ McDonald's Chicken McGrill sandwich (no sauce), 290 calories

■ Wendy's Grilled Chicken Sandwich, 300 calories

■ Subway's Veggie Delite Sub, 200 calories

■ Subway's Turkey Breast Sub, 240 calories

— **Eve Lees, editor, Personal Health Newsletter, www.artnews-healthnews.com**

Feel better, look better

Your knee is the largest, most complicated joint in the body and the most frequently damaged. Strong, flexible muscles are important in preventing knee problems and overdoing an activity, or having even a minor foot abnormality can place extra stress on the knees.

Here are some tips for being nice to your knees:

■ Lose that excess bodyweight — staying slim cuts down on the pounding knees have to bear.

■ Practise good technique in your sport or activity. Warm up before and stretch afterward. Wear protective gear and the proper shoe for the activity.

■ If do you injure yourself, ice the knee and rest it as much as possible. Healing may take weeks or months. Don't wrap the knee when first injured. Compression could disrupt circulation. Save the knee wraps for later, when you return to physical activity.

— **Personal Health Newsletter, www.artnews-healthnews.com**

Feel better, look better

If you've tried everything but still have that annoying tummy bulge, don't discount the possibility of an allergy. We know it sound like just another excuse but allergic reactions to foods can and do trigger inflammation. Food allergies most frequently affect the intestines and they could be causing the bloating and fluid retention in your midsection. Try to pinpoint foods you may be allergic to — common allergens include nuts, dairy products, wheat, eggs and oranges. You can also get a referral to an allergy specialist for allergy testing.

— **Eve Lees, editor, Personal Health Newsletter, www.artnews-healthnews.com**

Feel better, look better

We've all heard about the importance of building strong bones and the role of exercise but how does it work?

Mechanical loading on the skeleton, such as walking, jumping rope, and weight training can never be matched for effectiveness by dietary calcium or other nutritional measures. This is because the pull of tendon on bone (tendons attach muscles to bones) actually stimulates the production of calcium in the bone.

Children and teens should eat right and be physically active and continue these behaviours as they age. Studies also show the strongest and densest bones are found in those who participate in a balanced fitness program of both aerobic activities and strength training.

Use the cross-training principle; participate in a variety of activities and sports.

— **Eve Lees, editor, Personal Health Newsletter, www.artnews-healthnews.com**