

## Flora & Fauna

### Nature's Best Foods for Your Body

You probably know that fresh fruits and veggies are the healthiest foods you can put in your body. But did you also know that the shape of some of your favorite vegetables offer a clue as to which part of your body they bring the most benefit?

**Sweet Potatoes** resemble the pancreas. They contain carotenoids that help stabilize blood sugar levels and lower insulin resistance. Half of a baked sweet potato is a much more filling side dish and offers many more health benefits than refined pasta or traditional mashed potatoes.

**Carrots**, when sliced, resemble the human eye, complete with iris, pupil, and radiating lines. Carrots are packed with beta-carotene, which the body converts to vitamin A. Vitamin A helps prevent night blindness and assists with the maintenance of a healthy, clearer cornea. Carrots also contain lutein, an antioxidant that helps increase pigment density in the macula, resulting in retina protection and a lower risk of macular degeneration.

Most **tomatoes** are red and have chambers, just like the heart. They're loaded with lycopene, an antioxidant that protects cells from oxygen damage and helps prevent heart disease. They also contain potassium, which lowers high blood pressure, niacin, which lowers high cholesterol, and vitamin B6 and folate, which promote healthy blood vessel walls.

A bunch of **grapes** hangs in a shape that resembles the heart. Grapes are high in antioxidants and are a profound heart- and blood-vitalizing food. Grape juice, in fact, has been shown to help lower blood pressure.

A **walnut** looks like a little brain, with left and right hemisphere, and wrinkles/folds. Walnuts are high in omega-3s and are said to help develop more than three dozen neurotransmitters for healthy brain function.

Think of the stalks of **celery, bok choy, rhubarb, and collard greens** as bones. These green, leafy veggies offer calcium to your body to help maintain bone health.

**Onions** look like cells, and have powerful antimicrobial properties. They also have a pungent aroma and have been used to treat coughs, asthma, and bronchitis. Their culinary companion, **garlic**, also helps fight internal bacterial infections such as Salmonella and E. coli.

The benefits of these fruits and veggies aren't limited to the body parts mentioned above, but it is essential to any diet to get a good variety on a daily basis. While eating fresh fruits and vegetables offers the most benefits to your body, you can also get lots of nutritional benefits from canned or even frozen varieties at your local grocery store.

## **GUARANTEE SYSTEM.**

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### Cleaning Corner:

#### Disposing of a Broken CFL Bulb

The US Environmental Protection Agency endorses Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs because, when compared with standard incandescent bulbs, they offer many environmental benefits and greater energy savings. The downside is that each CFL bulb contains a very small amount of mercury sealed within the glass tubing (about the size of a ball point pen tip). So, if a bulb breaks, special precautions must be taken for proper disposal:

1. Weather permitting, open a window to ventilate the room.
2. Sweep up the broken glass fragments and fine particles with a piece of cardboard and a damp paper towel – **do not vacuum.**
3. Contain broken glass, cardboard, and the paper towel in a zip lock bag. Place the bag inside a brown paper bag marked "broken glass."
4. Place the double bags in the outside garbage can – **do not put it inside a trash compactor.**

## February

- 1653 New Amsterdam, now known as New York City, is incorporated
- 1836 3,000 Mexicans attack 182 Texans at the Alamo. The siege lasts 13 days
- 1868 The first parade to have floats is staged at Mardi Gras in New Orleans, Louisiana
- 1933 Two days after becoming chancellor, Adolf Hitler dissolves Parliament
- 1935 Lie detector first used in court
- 1962 8 of 9 planets align for the first time in 400 years
- 1970 National Public Radio (NPR) is founded in the United States
- 1982 "Late Night with David Letterman" premieres on NBC

# Health Advice: Caring for Your Knees

The knee is the body's most complex joint, capable of opening, closing, and rotating. It enables you to walk around the block, run a marathon, and do the rumba. It's the vital hinge you rarely think about until, one day, you do. Maybe it's the twinge you feel while taking that last glide down the ski slope, or the funny crackling noise you knee makes when you carry the laundry basket downstairs. Whatever the reason, it's a good idea to notice your knees – and take care of the joints that take care of you.

## What's that clicking sound?

Knee pain is common in women approaching midlife. Weight gain is one of the most common causes. Other culprits include too little exercise and, conversely, intense weekend-warrior activity. Too much of a single type of exercise can also strain the knees. Here are a few common knee problems and their symptoms:

**Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) Sprains** – are typically caused by sudden twists of the knee. They are often accompanied by a popping sensation followed by pain and perhaps a feeling that the knee is giving out. Women participating in sports are seven times more likely than men to experience noncontact injuries to the ACL. **Treatment:** Simple remedies such as rest, ibuprofen, and ice packs are most effective. Of course, if pain persists, you should see your doctor.

**Iliotibial Band (ITB) Syndrome** – is characterized by a dull ache on the outward side of the knee and possibly the thigh, too. Cyclists and runners – two athletic groups susceptible to ITB syndrome – often experience the pain 10-15 minute into exercise. **Treatment:** Stretching is helpful, and orthotics (specially designed shoe inserts) may be used to correct the body's alignment.

**Meniscus Tears** – tend to occur only after significant trauma. However, for people over 40, for whom age-related degeneration is setting in, tearing of the meniscus can occur more easily, usually when the knee is forced to make a rapid twisting motion. There is typically a "pop," sharp pain, and, sometimes, an inability to straighten the leg. **Treatment:** Ice packs and ibuprofen can be helpful, but since meniscus tears have a poor track record for healing, surgery may be necessary to repair the tissue.

**Tendinitis** – is caused by repetitive activities such as running, cycling, or jumping. Squatting and kneeling can also inflame the tendons of the knee. Tendinitis hurts not only at the moment the injury is caused, but it may persist even when the knee is not active. **Treatment:** Healing requires a fine balance of rest and exercise to gradually increase flexibility to build leg muscles.

**Runner's Knee** – can usually be blamed on heredity. Runners whose feet roll inward during a stride, or those who have flat feet or a second toe longer than the big toe can experience soreness and knee clicking. Going down stairs may be uncomfortable, and the knees may be quite stiff after sitting for a long time. **Treatment:** Orthotics to correct a runner's stride may be used, but special exercises to strengthen the quadriceps will also be effective in keeping the kneecap in its proper place.

## Kid Corner: Are You Smart about Kids' Health?

Pop quizzes are usually a surprise sprung on children in school. But here's a pop quiz for all you parents and grandparents about kids' health. How much do you already know, and what do you need some brushing up on?

### Q: When should you start cleaning children's teeth?

**A:** Wipe teeth daily with a clean, damp cloth as soon as the first tooth appears. Change to a soft-bristled toothbrush as more teeth come in. Use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste once children are ages 2 and older. Supervise the brushing, and teach children to spit the toothpaste out.

### Q: How long should kids wash their hands?

**A:** About 20 seconds – or two times through "Happy Birthday." Teach them to scrub often with soap and running water, especially after using the bathroom and before eating.

### Q: Is skin cancer a concern only for adults?

**A:** No! Skin protection is important at any age. Use broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15. Keep babies younger than 6 months out of direct sunlight as much as possible.

### Q: How much exercise do kids need?

**A:** Medical experts recommend that children ages 6-17 years exercise at least an hour every day. Bike rides, sports and family walks all qualify.

### Q: How many diseases do vaccines prevent?

**A:** Children can be vaccinated against 14 diseases, including potentially life-threatening conditions such as diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus. For an immunization schedule, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention online at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines).

### Q: Does it really make a difference if I talk about how bad smoking is?

**A:** Yes! Kids are less likely to smoke if they know their family would be disappointed by it.

### Q: Are dairy products the only food source of calcium to help build strong bones?

**A:** No. There's calcium in broccoli and other dark green, leafy vegetables. It's also in fortified cereals and beverages, tofu, salmon, and some types of beans. Vitamin D and regular exercise help build strong bones, too.

## Ingredients

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 egg whites
- 2/3 cup plain yogurt

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line muffin cups with foil or paper liners.
2. In a bowl, stir together the flour, baking powder and baking soda. Set aside.
3. In a large mixing bowl with an electric mixer, beat together the sugar, butter and vanilla on high speed for about 2 minutes, or until well mixed. Add the egg whites, one at a time, beating for about a minute after each one. Add the flour mixture alternately with the yogurt, in about 3 portions each, beating after each addition just until combined, and scraping down the sides to make sure everything is well mixed.
4. Pour batter into the prepared cupcake pan and place in the oven. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until lightly browned on top and a toothpick poked into the middle of a cupcake comes out clean. Let cool completely on a rack.
5. Frost with your choice of icing and decorate in any way your heart desires!

## Tips for Baking:

- Pour water into empty cups of a muffin tin when baking fewer than 12 muffins or cupcakes. The water helps the cupcakes bake and rise more evenly.
- Use an ice cream scoop to fill cupcake liners. Or, fill a 1-quart ziptop freezer bag, cut off a corner, and pipe batter into liners.
- Measure dry and semi-solid ingredients (such as peanut butter or fruit preserves) in dry measuring cups only.
- When measuring powdery dry ingredients like flour or cocoa powder, gently spoon it into your measuring cup and level off with a knife. The only ingredient you should pack into a cup is brown sugar.

## What to Do with an Old Pair of Jeans

Do you have an old pair of jeans stashed away somewhere, or are you or your kids wearing a pair that really should be retired? Instead of pitching those torn, faded, or out-grown jeans into the trash, turn them into something useful! Here are a few crafty and creative ideas.

**Pot Holders** – Cut out a square or two from the jeans, add a layer from an old cotton bath towel (*do not use polyester batting, fleece, felt or any other polyester or acrylic product for the middle layer. These materials can catch fire and melt causing skin injury*), and then sew a colorful piece of fabric to the other side. Be sure to add a small looped piece of fabric to one corner so you can hang the potholder if necessary.

**Hanging Sleeves** – Transform the legs of your old jeans into sleeves for plastic bags or rags. Sew a piece of elastic to either end and add a looped ribbon so you can hang it later. Then stuff your bags or rags through the top and pull them out the bottom when you need them!

**Patches** – Instead of throwing out that holey pair of jeans, sew on some funky patches that add a unique style. You can find some inexpensive iron-on patches at your local fabric or craft store. Simply iron the patch on over the torn part of the jeans, and then sew around it using a whipstitch for reinforcement.

**Scarecrow Clothes** – when it comes time to keeping pesky crows and critters out of your garden, a scarecrow works wonders. Stuff an old shirt and your old pair of jeans with some hay, add a head made from a stuffed burlap sack, throw on a big floppy hat to top it off, and *voila* you've got a great-looking scarecrow for your garden. You can also hold on to it after the gardening season is over and turn that scarecrow into a fun porch decoration in the fall!

**Funky Wrapping Paper** – giving a gift to a teenager? Why not wrap the box with an old pair of jeans? Cut the fabric and glue it to the bottom and lid of a sturdy box using a hot glue gun. For some whimsy, use the section of the jeans with the back pocket for the lid of the box. Then tuck a card in the pocket. You can add embellishments such as beaded ribbons to give it some extra flare.

## Carpet and Upholstery Protectors

The next time your carpet care professional visits your home, he/she may ask you if you want a protector like Scotchgard® or Teflon® applied after the cleaning is done.

Protectors are a terrific and inexpensive way to prevent costly damage to carpet or upholstery. Because of their unique chemistry, protectors act like a shield on carpet and upholstery fibers so most spills are repelled, giving you the chance to grab a towel and blot it up before it becomes a permanent stain. (Remember to always blot, never rub when cleaning up a spill!)

A protector won't change the way your carpet feels, either – it will still be soft and fluffy. But you'll know it's there the moment you see a nasty spill hovering above the fibers instead of sinking down into them.

Your carpet care professional has the tools to easily apply a protector to your entire carpeting, or just the high traffic areas, such as hallways, dining rooms, or living rooms – anywhere that food spills and other stains are most frequent. Most upholstery can be protected, as well.

So the next time we have the opportunity to clean the carpet in your home, we hope you'll also allow us to help protect it against future spills and stains. We care about the cleanliness of your home and are happy to offer this extra service to keep your carpet and upholstery looking beautiful!



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