“Summertime and the livin’ is easy!”

It’s June! It’s time to relax and enjoy the more stress-free days of summer! Maybe your life is stress-free already, but probably not. If you are like most folks, stress is a part of all of our lives.

How do YOU handle stress? Have you ever thought about this? Finding your own tools for coping with stress is key to getting over life’s biggest hurdles. Try one or two of the tips below from Florida Blue (www.FloridaBlue.com) until you find a few that work for you and give them a try this summer:

Write: Jot down all of the things that are bothering you. For 10-15 minutes each day, write the details of stressful events and how they made you feel.

Talk: Or cry or laugh, but the point is to let your feelings out when you need to. Share your thoughts with a trusted friend, counselor or family member.

Exercise: Getting regular exercise is a great way to handle stress. Try walking to get started or pull some weeds in your yard.

Have Fun: You may think that you are too busy to add anything else to your schedule, but making time for something you enjoy may help you relax. Try gardening, crafts, volunteering, or playing with pets.

Whatever you choose to do this summer, may you have a relaxing and stress free time!

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Secrets of Stress-Free Vacations with Kids

By Mary Hunt | March 31, 2015

Family vacations can be either delightful or disastrous—it depends greatly on your attitude and the care you devote to research and planning.

Adjust your attitude. Here is the first rule of family vacations: Parents on vacation really aren’t. If you can unload personal expectations that you will be relaxed and refreshed when it’s over, you won’t be disappointed when you’re not. And if you do get a little R&R along the way, consider it an unexpected bonus.

Be realistic about cost. Decide ahead of time how much cash you have for this vacation. If you have say a family of five and $500 to spend, don’t even think about a couple of days at Disney World. Always consider the money you have first and then design a vacation that will realistically fit within that financial boundary.

Be realistic about time. Don’t try to stretch your available cash to cover the maximum time you have to be away from home. Divide what you can spend by a reasonable daily budget to determine how many days you can be gone. Carefully consider all the costs, not only the admission fees and overnight accommodations. Instead of full weeks, consider day trips or a weekend vacation. When it comes to family vacations, quality is considerably more important than quantity.

Single parents. It is really tough to go it alone. If you have more than one child, full vacation responsibility can be overwhelming. You need help so consider staying with relatives or travel with a group. Sharing the trip with another single-parent family with kids the same age can reduce costs significantly. It will relieve your anxiety and stress, too.

Involve the kids. If everyone is involved in making the plans and saving the money, you will prevent lots of problems. Let the kids have a say in where you will go. Talk about how much money you have to spend. Show the kids what it costs to eat in a restaurant, spend the night in a hotel or buy tickets for the amusement park. Look at travel guides to find the best bargains for the amenities you agree on. Also, take a look at the a brand new resource, Planning Successful Family Vacations: A guide for traveling with kids. Encourage everyone in the family to think of ways to cut back to allow more money for activities or what you have decided is top priority.

Envelope method. There’s nothing like a good visual to keep a vacation based in reality. Large colorful envelopes are ideal, one for each day to hold that day’s allotted cash. Design the outside for the spending record so you can keep track of where the money is going.

Living history museums. There are at least 2,000 living-history museums around the country where the past seems as real as the present and learning is a joyous adventure. Spring and summer are the best times to visit because there are so many special children’s programs and family events. Many can be seen in an afternoon, while others might require the entire weekend. I suggest you start with virtual visit. Go to www.alhfam.org, the site of The Association for Living History Farms and Agricultural Museums located in every area of the U.S. and Canada where you can take a virtual tour of wonderful places like the Jamestown Settlement in Williamsburg, Virginia, The Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan, Conner Prairie in Fishers, Indiana, to name just a few. You can find hours of operation, entrance fees as well as the programs they offer currently.

Whether you plan to travel this summer or design a stay-at-home vacation, it’s not too early to start planning. Besides, half the fun is the anticipation!

Click Here to Read More
It’s Getting Hot Out There.
And getting out there (outside) often means getting dirty! As you and your family enjoy more outdoor activities, it’s likely that your laundry pile will heat up, too! Between sports, playgrounds, yard work, and the spring cleaning of household fabrics, managing your laundry pile is easier with a few tips. See ACI’s recommendations for how often to wash a variety of common wardrobe items and linens. Click Here to Read More

It’s picnic season! Should I clean or disinfect my summer serving trays and utensils? Click Here to find out

Cancer-Fighting Cruciferous Salad (Recipe)
Light summer vegetables like radishes, watercress and arugula are cruciferous, with powerful cancer-fighting compounds. You’ll get them in this garden-fresh salad. Click Here to Read More

Protecting Your Family From Botulism
By Carol Church | Writer, Family Album | April 29, 2015
Reviewed by Amarat Simonne, PhD, UF/IFAS Department of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences

What do you know about botulism? Personally, just hearing the word makes me feel a bit nervous. Recently, an outbreak of foodborne botulism after a church potluck has many us thinking about this severe illness. At least 21 people have been hospitalized, and tragically, one has died. Home-canned potatoes are suspected to have been the source.

Although botulism is significantly less common than other foodborne illnesses (about 100 cases per year in the US), it can be extremely serious. The death rate is about 3 to 5%. Most cases in the US today occur in babies (infant botulism).

What is Botulism?
Botulism comes from the C. botulinum bacteria, which occurs naturally in soil, in stream, lake, and ocean sediments, and in fish, shellfish, and mammals. This bacteria produces neurotoxins—substances that harms nerve tissue in living beings.

What Causes Botulism?
Botulism toxins may be present in food that has not been properly cooked, processed, handled, or stored, and is especially common in low-acid home-canned foods, such as vegetables, seafood, and meat. Home-made, unrefrigerated garlic in oil and herbs in oil, as well as foil-wrapped baked potatoes that have been left at room temperature, are also known sources. However, other foods can cause foodborne botulism, too.

Commercially processed juices and canned goods have sometimes been associated with botulism as well. And babies under the age of 1 year can get infant...
CDC and FDA Find No Reduction in Overall Youth Tobacco Use Rates, E-Cigarette Use Dramatically Increases

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) analyzed data from the 2011-2014 National Youth Tobacco Surveys to determine the prevalence and trends of current use of nine tobacco products among middle and high school students. What they found was that e-cigarette use tripled among middle and high school students in just one year, 2013-2014. Hookah use doubled overall. And there was no decline seen in overall tobacco use among middle or high school students. Click Here to Read More

Composting at Home

As they say, April showers bring May flowers. Give those flowers a nutrient rich soil by adding compost to your landscape beds. Composting is a great way to turn kitchen scraps and yard waste into what gardeners call “black gold.” Click Here to Read More

Further Reading:

- Source: http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/familyalbum/2015/04/29/protecting-your-family-from-botulism/

References:


What Are the Symptoms?

People who have eaten food contaminated with the botulism toxin usually develop symptoms about 8-36 hours later. Symptoms of botulism include the nausea, stomach cramps, and vomiting typical of foodborne illness or “food poisoning.” In addition, the botulism toxin can cause muscle weakness, muscle paralysis, double vision, trouble swallowing, slurred speech, dry mouth, and respiratory problems. Respiratory failure is among the most serious consequences of infection. Today, botulism cases can be treated with an antitoxin, but the symptoms must be recognized as botulism first. Botulism is not contagious and does not cause fever.

Prevention

How can you avoid this dangerous toxin? Experts have some advice. Always wash foods well before canning them, and follow current, up-to-date canning recommendations and recipes to the letter! Oils containing garlic or herbs must be kept refrigerated and should be discarded after two to three days. And if you bake potatoes in tinfoil, keep them hot (>135°F) until you serve them or refrigerate them. Follow good food handling practices at all times, keeping foods out of temperature “danger zones.” Discard any canned goods (home canned or commercial) that are swollen, leaking, bulging or damaged (including lids). And never feed honey or corn syrup to a baby under one year!

Botulism is a frightening illness, but fortunately, it is rare. You can protect yourself and your family against this toxin by following safe food handling and canning practices. Click Here to Read More

botulism from ingesting bacterial spores in honey. (It is also possible to contract wound botulism and intestinal botulism.)
Cut Flower Gardens

Bring the sights and scents of your garden into your home with a cut flower garden! Roses usually come to mind when people think of cut flowers, but there are many plants that can be grown in Florida gardens that will be beautiful in your home including salvia, zinnia, gaillardia, gerbera, and bird of paradise. And don’t forget the many tropical plants with uniquely textured or colored leaves. Click Here to Read More

Alcohol has lasting impact on memory in teenagers

*IANS | Apr 29, 2015, 12:47 PM IST*

Drinking alcohol heavily during adolescence results in long-lasting changes in parts of the brain that control learning and memory, says a study.

“In the eyes of the law, once people reach the age of 18, they are considered adult but the brain continues to mature and refine all the way into the mid-20s,” explained lead author Mary-Louise Risher, post-doctoral researcher at Duke University.

It is important for young people to know that when they drink heavily during this period of development, “there could be changes occurring that have a lasting impact on memory and other cognitive functions,” Risher noted.

The researchers periodically exposed young rodents to a level of alcohol during adolescence that, in humans, would result in impairment, but not sedation.

Afterward, these animals received no further exposure to alcohol, and grew into adulthood -- which in rats occurred within 24 to 29 days.

Using small electrical stimuli applied to the hippocampus, a brain region where memory and learning are controlled, the researchers measured a cellular mechanism which is the strengthening of brain synapses as they are used to learn new tasks or conjure memories.

“Something happens during adolescent alcohol exposure that changes the way the hippocampus and other regions of the brain function and how the cells actually look,” added senior study author Scott Swartzwelder, professor at Duke University.

The study was published in the journal Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research.

...a hook and a line and the fishin’s just fine!

Fishing For Success (FFS) is a multifaceted program that uses fishing and other related activities as the “hook” to introduce children of all ages to various aspects of fisheries and aquatic environmental sciences. The current program began in 1998, and has constantly evolved to meet the needs of 4-H extension faculty, teachers, youth group leaders and the community at large. The initial focus of the program was to provide mentoring and career counseling to a small group of underprivileged youth.

Fishing for Success is part of the UF/IFAS Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences program in the School of Forest Resources and Conservation and Florida LAKEWATCH with help from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC), the Gainesville Police Department, and the Alachua County Sheriff’s Office. Click Here to Read More
Fact or fiction? You can reduce risk of Alzheimer’s disease

Eat right to protect brain aging and reduce Alzheimer’s risk

The MIND diet, a hybrid between the Mediterranean and DASH diets, has been associated with slower cognitive decline. This diet emphasizes eating more berries and leafy green vegetables and could reduce risk of Alzheimer’s disease by 53%. Diets rich in vitamin E also reduce risk but interestingly this benefit is only seen when vitamin E comes from foods rather than supplements.

Foods that are highest in vitamin E include:
- Sunflower seeds
- Almonds
- Peanut butter

Experts in the field of brain aging and Alzheimer’s prevention developed evidence-based Dietary and Lifestyle Guidelines for the Prevention of Alzheimer’s at the International Conference on Nutrition and the Brain in 2013:
- Minimize your intake of saturated fats and trans fats.
- Make vegetables, legumes (beans, peas, and lentils), fruits and whole grains the primary staples in your diet while limiting meat and dairy.
- Get vitamin E from foods rather than supplements.
- Make sure you meet the recommended daily allowance for vitamin B12 (2.4 mg per day for adults) by including vitamin B12 rich foods in your diet or taking a vitamin B12 supplement. As many factors, including age and genetics, may impair absorption of vitamin B12, you may consider getting your vitamin B12 levels checked.
- If taking a multivitamin, choose one without iron. Consume iron supplements only when directed by your physician.

Include aerobic exercise in your routine (at least 40 minutes of brisk walking 3 times per week).

People with certain genetic variants are more susceptible to deficiency of vitamins that are important for brain health, such as vitamin E, B12 and folate. Check your genes and symptoms of vitamin deficiencies.

Genetics of Alzheimer’s disease

Though the exact cause is unknown, late-onset Alzheimer’s disease is likely caused by a combination of genetic and lifestyle factors. The most common genetic variant that increases risk of Alzheimer’s disease is the E4 allele of the APOE gene. One E4 allele increases risk 2.5-fold and two alleles increase risk 8-fold. For unknown reasons, the MIND diet and vitamin E is not as protective against Alzheimer’s disease for E4 allele carriers.

Other proactive steps we can take to reduce Alzheimer’s disease risk is to exercise regularly and engage in activities that are cognitively stimulating. Research shows that challenging your mind by learning new things into adulthood, such as a musical instrument or a new language, can help reduce Alzheimer’s disease risk.

Take action!

Protect your brain from aging and be proactive to minimize your risk of Alzheimer’s. Use the HealthWatch 360 web tool or mobile app to find out how much brain-protecting vitamin E, B12 and folate you are getting from your diet. Keep track of your fitness. You can also track symptoms in the health tracker and use the “trend” function to find correlations between your symptoms and nutritional intake. Click to download iPhone App, Android App, Web Tool.

To a long and stimulating life!

GB HealthWatch

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