

the healthy swimmer



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Exercise Influences Sexual Performance and Desirability

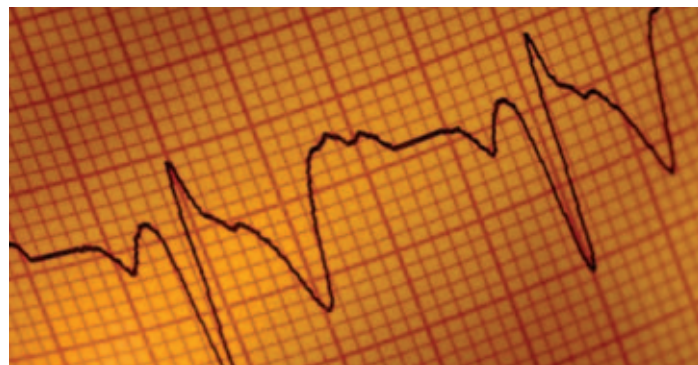
Here's yet another reason to work out. A recent study by University of Arkansas doctoral student Tina Penhollow, and co-author, Michael Young, Ph.D., suggests that exercise may spice up your sex life. The study, published in Vol. 7 of the *Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality*, explores how exercise influences sexual self-esteem and self-perception. The study suggests that individuals who exercise regularly and feel physically fit generally rate themselves higher with regard to sexual performance and sexual desirability when compared with less physically active and

less physically fit individuals.

The research revealed one unexpected finding. Self-perception of sexual desirability decreased among women who exercised six to seven days per week, compared with women who exercised four to five days a week.

"There's plenty of research out there on the health benefits of fitness," according to Penhollow, "but not much research into how exercise can improve perceptions of oneself sexually. This study supports the notion that exercise may go beyond its traditional role as protective factor and enhance individuals' sexual self-esteem." <<<

>>> **The complete article on Penhollow's and Young's study is available at www.ejhs.org/tocv7.html.**



Steve Allen/BrandX Pictures/Getty Images

READERS ASK: When to See the Doc

Q: When should I see a healthcare provider for swimming aches and pains?

A: "The short answer is: it depends," says Jessica Seaton, chair of the USMS Sports Medicine Committee. If the problem involves chest or abdominal aches and pains, visit your primary care physician as soon as possible. However, if the aches and pains involve the musculo-skeletal system (shoulders, knees, back, elbow, etc.), the severity of the pain should tell you when to visit the doctor. If the pain is sharp, if it prevents you from

completing a workout or if you need to take any pain or anti-inflammatory medication to swim pain-free, it's probably time to visit your physician, Seaton advises. Because medications treat symptoms but not the underlying cause of injury, most swimming-related aches and pains of the muscles and joints require rehabilitative exercises.

"I strongly recommend you see someone with a specialty in sports medicine," says Seaton, "preferably someone who treats a lot of swimmers. The specialist could be a chiropractor, an orthopedic surgeon or a physiatrist who may refer you to a physical therapist."

Sleep Apnea Sufferers Prone to Heart Attacks at Night

For most people, the risk of a fatal heart attack occurs between 6 a.m. and noon. However, if you suffer from sleep apnea, a common sleep disorder associated with snoring and brief periods when breathing slows or stops, the risk of dying from a heart attack is greatest at night, while sleeping.

According to a report from researchers at the Mayo Clinic and published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, more than half of the sudden deaths occurring from cardiac causes in 112 subjects with diagnosed sleep apnea happened between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., exactly the opposite of that seen in the general population. The reasons for this finding are unclear, and the study did not determine that sleep apnea sufferers are more at risk for heart attacks. And, because the records regarding individual treatment for sleep apnea were not available, the study did not determine whether treatment for sleep apnea decreases the risk. <<<

>>> **For more information about sleep apnea, visit the American Lung Association web site (www.lungusa.org) or the American Sleep Apnea Association (www.sleepapnea.org).**



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Health Tip: Measure Your Waist

According to a report in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, waist size may be a more accurate determining risk factor for heart disease than body mass index (BMI). The findings are based on a study conducted by Shankuan Zhu, M.D., and colleagues at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

BMI is a method of measuring body fat based on height and weight, and it is usually a reliable indicator of total body fat. However, BMI does have its limitations, particularly for athletes and older people. BMI may overestimate body fat in athletes and others who have a muscular build, and it may underestimate body fat in older people and others who have lost muscle mass.

The study included 10,969 subjects who participated in the third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

In evaluating survey results, Zhu found that waist circumference was more closely tied to levels of cholesterol, blood pressure and glucose levels than BMI.

A related study led by Salim Yusuf, M.D., professor of medicine at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, yielded similar findings. In that study, Yusuf found that measuring the waist is a better predictor of heart attack risk because "it is a measure of abdominal fat, which is the type of fat that is most closely associated with heart attacks."

Waist circumference measurements of approximately 35 inches for women and 40 inches for men correlate with BMIs indicating obesity. It should be noted that these measurements are an estimate. To accurately assess the relationship of waist measurement to cardiovascular risk, you should always check with your physician. <<<

Sleep More, Weigh Less?

If you're looking to shed a few pounds, try getting more sleep. A recent study conducted at New York's Columbia University has found a link between the sleep deprivation and weight gain.

The study, led by Steven Heymsfield, M.D., and James Gangwisch, M.D., determined that individuals who get fewer than four hours of sleep per night are 73 percent more likely to be obese than those who sleep seven to nine hours. Subjects who averaged more sleep appeared to have less risk of obesity.

Information was collected from approximately 18,000 adults, who participated in the U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey in the 1980s.

According to Gangwisch, the concept of sleeping more may seem "somewhat counterintuitive" because the body burns fewer calories while resting. However, sleep deprivation lowers leptin, a blood protein that suppresses appetite and may also affect how the brain senses satiety. Sleep deprivation also raises levels of ghrelin, which increases appetite. <<<

>>> For more information, visit the North American Association for the Study of Obesity at www.naaso.org.



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Correction

The March/April issue's coverage of vitamin supplements (p. 13) incorrectly reported Linus Pauling's recommendations for daily vitamin C intake. Pauling recommended as much as 10,000 milligrams per day to prevent colds. As reader and biochemist Stephen Weitz, Ph.D., kindly points out, "As stated in your article, 10,000 grams of vitamin C would be about 22 pounds of vitamin C per day. To make matters worse, the article goes on to say that you cannot overdose on vitamin C. I know that 20 pounds of vitamin C per day would probably kill anybody, just from the acidosis. If someone actually tried to take 22 pounds of vitamin C per day, they might die and that would be a tragedy!" Indeed. We regret the error. <<<