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April 2021

TINY HAZARDS

In 2012, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission stopped the sale of high-powered magnet sets, after thousands of injuries occurred when the small shiny objects were swallowed, often by children. After the ban, the average number of reported injuries declined. However, in 2016 the ban was overturned by a federal court. A study in the *Journal of Pediatrics*, reports after the ban was lifted, the average number of magnet injury cases per year has increased more than four hundred percent. Authors say children need to be protected, because parents don't always know if their child has swallowed something so small and sometimes time is critical to avoid serious internal harm.

HEART HEALTHY PLUS

A heart-healthy lifestyle may do more than lower your risk of heart disease. A new study from Massachusetts General Hospital, published in the journal *CardioOncology*, finds evidence a heart-healthy lifestyle may also lower the risk of cancer. The researchers found the opposite is also true—that a less heart-healthy lifestyle is associated with a higher risk of cancer. The study shows increased levels of natriuretic peptides, markers of stress on the heart, also predicted higher risk of cancer. As a reminder, the American Heart Association says a heart-healthy lifestyle includes managed blood pressure, controlled cholesterol, reduced blood sugar, being physically active, eating healthy and being a non-smoker.

UNCOMMON SYMPTOM

Every report you hear on To Your Health is based on new scientific research. This is an exception. Sometimes medical information is not new, until you hear it for the first time. This one may be in that category. I have a friend who, while out walking with her husband, felt a tightness in her throat. She mentioned it to her husband, a physician. A few minutes later he asked if the tightness continued. It had. He recognized it as one of the less common signs of angina or inadequate blood flow to the heart. After tests, the woman underwent a quintuple bypass. She's doing fine, but how many of us would have recognized tightness in the throat as a sign of angina, which usually shows as chest pain?

MARCHING BAND RISKS

As warmer weather begins to return, sports teams also return to their fields. Over the years, greater focus has been placed on the health of these young athletes, such as workouts that may cause over exertion and heat exhaustion. Athletic trainers are tasked with balancing workouts with player safety. Members of marching bands may not be included in the need for athletic trainers. They may wear heavy uniforms and perform in sweltering temperatures. A study at Kansas University Medical Center scientifically measured band members core body temperatures, hydration and sweat levels to prove the point—band members are very much at risk and deserve athletic trainers for their safety.

CHRONIC PAIN APP

Chronic pain is often hard to describe, depending on the cause. But it estimated that about ten percent of people in various countries have chronic wide-spread pain. Those who have it may find it frustrating to explain how they are feeling. An app may be just what they need. The University Health Network in Toronto enrolled patients in a study of the Manage My Pain digital app. It helped patients tell their story to caregivers by recording their daily activities and rating their pain, especially important in rural areas where medical facilities may be limited. There may be other methods of managing chronic pain, but the Manage My Pain app showed significant improvement in several challenges faced by chronic pain sufferers. More information at managemypain.com.

STRESS AND JUNK FOOD

When stressed there is a tendency to eat. Ohio State University researchers took a closer look by asking women about stress and its effect on their family. Many of the women who watched the interviews said it was the first time they realized they were so stressed out. They were aware of feeling impatient, having trouble sleeping or having head and neck pain, but they didn't know those are signs of stress. Overweight mothers of young children ate less fast food and high fat snacks after participating in the study and reducing stress in their lives. Authors say it is not that these women didn't want to eat healthier, but when stressed out, you tend not to care what you eat. The study appears in the journal *Nutrients*.

HEALTHY HOME, HEALTHY COUCH

Who of us would not want to make our home healthier? Where would you start? The journal *Environment International* published a study by the Silent Spring Institute which suggests starting with your couch. Couches have long been suspected of giving off toxic chemicals used as flame retardants. The old flame retardants can migrate out of the furniture as dust, increasing risk of cancer, lower IQ and other harmful effects, especially to babies and young children. Newer

furniture has less toxic material.

Researchers enrolled participants from thirty-three homes who were willing to swap out their couches. Dust samples collected over a period of months showed significantly slower toxicity.

NOT JUST FLU PROTECTION

You may have heard that very few cases of the flu occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. Credit is given to masks and social distancing as well as flu shots. Turns out a flu vaccination may be helpful against Covid-19. University of Michigan researchers reported that people who got a flu shot the previous season were slightly less likely to test positive for Covid-19. Further, people who received the flu shot were significantly less likely to be hospitalized for Covid. The Michigan team notes some media outlets have debunked the idea, but researchers say their study suggests a simple flu shot may have benefits beyond protecting us from the flu.

POPEYE WAS RIGHT

Your mother may have admonished you to eat your vegetables—likely more than once. She may have had help from that mythical character, Popeye, whose strength came from consuming a can of spinach. Now, scientific evidence suggests just one cup of leafy green vegetables every day could boost muscle strength. Australian researchers wrote in the *Journal of Nutrition* that people who consumed the highest nitrate-rich diet had eleven percent greater lower limb strength—independent of the benefit from any physical activity. Four thousand people took part in the study. While leafy greens may be among our least favorite vegetables, they could be the most important.

Some people believe adults should talk normally to babies—that is, not engage in baby talk. Research has already shown babies learning a single language pay attention longer to the exaggerated sounds of infant-directed speech. Now researchers at UCLA found babies who were exposed to two languages had greater interest in baby talk from an adult rather than adult speech. Which language didn't appear to make much difference, since the study covered four continents. The article in *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, offers this assurance—parents can babble to their babies in one language or two and rest easy knowing they won't cause any confusion.