

## Open Your Eyes to the Importance of Dilated Eye Exams

The ability to see is a gift that we often take for granted. Without it, our lives would change dramatically. That's why it's so important to take care of your eyes and have them checked with a yearly eye exam.

Dilating the pupil of the eye is especially important. This gives the eye doctor a three-dimensional view of the retina and optic nerve, which can help diagnose problems such as glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. In many cases, early detection and treatment of these problems can help you avoid permanent damage to your eyesight.

In a dilated eye exam, a few drops are placed in each eye to widen the pupils. The doctor examines the back of your eye by looking through a special magnifying

lens. This enables the doctor to identify any problems or early signs of disease. The exam takes only a few minutes but your close-up vision may remain a little blurred for a few hours afterward.

**Dilated eye exams are especially important for people who have been diagnosed with diabetes and for those who may be at risk for developing diabetes because there is a greater chance for them to develop serious vision problems.** Nearly half of all people with type 1 or type 2 diabetes have some form of diabetic retinopathy, which potentially can lead to blindness. The good news is that finding and treating the problem early can prevent or delay blindness in 90% of cases.

Many people with diabetic retinopathy don't realize they have the condition because it often causes no pain or symptoms in its early stages. However, if you experience blurred vision, pain or pressure in your eyes, or sudden loss of vision, see your eye doctor right away.

Bottom line? Don't close your eyes to potential vision problems. **Visit your eye doctor every year for a dilated eye exam.** •

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## Wash Away a Cold

Here's a tip to help you stay healthy this winter: Start scrubbing. **Washing your hands is the best way to prevent the common cold.** Hands can pick up cold-causing germs from things such as doorknobs, desks, toys, and telephones.

To keep away a cold—or other illnesses caused by germs—be sure to wash your hands:

- before cooking and eating
- after using the bathroom or changing a diaper
- after playing with pets or cleaning up their waste
- after blowing your nose, sneezing, or coughing
- after handling garbage or money
- before and after touching someone who is sick.

Make sure your family follows this handy advice on how to wash up:

- Start with warm water and liquid or bar soap.
- Lather up by rubbing your hands together for about 15 seconds. Remember to wash around cuticles, under nails, and in the creases of your hands.
- Rinse well and dry.

# Do You Know Your Ejection Fraction Number?

If you have a known or suspected heart problem, your ejection fraction number can shed light on how your heart is functioning. If there's a problem, it can help your doctor find the right treatment for you.

Ejection fraction is the percentage of blood that is pumped out of your heart with each beat. No matter how hard it contracts, the heart never pumps out all of the available blood. But a normal, functioning heart pumps at least 50 to 55%. If the heart is damaged or weakened, the ejection fraction usually falls to 40% or below. Anywhere in between those numbers could signal a problem.

A low ejection fraction is a sign of systolic heart failure. This condition occurs when your heart muscle has been damaged and isn't able to pump out sufficient blood throughout your body. This damage can occur from heart disease, valve problems, or a heart attack. The good news is that systolic heart failure can be effectively managed through lifestyle changes, medication,

and other treatments.

The most common way to test ejection fraction is through an echocardiogram—an ultrasound of the heart. A device placed over the chest picks up sound waves bouncing off the heart. These sound waves are translated into images that can reveal important information about the size and movement of your heart. It also allows the doctor to measure the volume of blood in each of the heart's chambers.

It's important to know that some people who have a normal ejection fraction still may suffer from another form of heart failure called diastolic heart failure. This can happen when the heart muscle becomes stiff and can't relax enough between beats to fill up with blood. That's why, in addition to knowing your ejection fraction number, it's always important to discuss any heart disease-related signs and risk factors with your doctor.

If you are being treated or evaluated for a heart problem, be proactive. Talk with your doctor and find out your ejection fraction number and what it means to you. ●



## Fall into Fitness with These Exercise Tips

**A**utumn usually brings a welcome cooldown from summer weather—and beautiful scenery to boot. And that makes fall a great time to begin a physical activity program. Why wait for New Year's when the weather is likely to be less inspiring? Make a new-you physical activity resolution right now: Resolve to enjoy the glories of autumn through simple, calorie-burning activities.

### Exercise: For Your Good Health

Regular physical activity is one of the most powerful tools you have to reduce your health risks. Staying active can help prevent and control high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. It also can help strengthen bones and joints, and may help protect you against cancer. And it's vital to shedding unwanted pounds and maintaining a healthy weight.

An active lifestyle also offers mental health benefits. You may have more energy, feel less stressed, and get better sleep.

### Tips for Autumn Activities

The best exercises for you are activities that you enjoy—and will keep doing. Aim for 30 minutes a day, most days of the week. These ideas can help you get started:

■ **Walk everywhere.** Walk around your neighborhood to enjoy the fall colors and weather. Just a 10-minute walk after



every meal adds up to 30 minutes a day. Walk the dog, walk with a friend, or walk to the store from the farthest parking place in the lot.

■ **Get out and garden.** Rake leaves, prune your plants, cover everything with mulch, trim the hedges, and pick up trash from the yard. It all counts as exercise.

■ **Put the “work” into your workout.** Who says spring cleaning can't happen in the fall? Wash the windows, wash and wax the car, sweep the sidewalks. When the work's done, run around with your kids—or the neighbors' kids—in the yard or at the park. Showing young people that exercise is fun is one of the best gifts you can give them. ●

### HEALTH TIPS

Consider taking a short car ride to a new neighborhood and take a short walk.

If you have a cordless phone, walk around your house as you talk.

## PUMPKINS AND SQUASH: MAKE THE MOST OF FALL VEGGIES



When tasty fall produce hits the market, it's easy to get your daily requirement of three to five servings of vegetables a day. By eating plenty of vegetables, you supply your body with antioxidants, nutrients, and fiber that may lower your risk of cancer and heart disease.

Below are some tips for cooking with the pick of the season:

- Serve mashed pumpkin instead of mashed potatoes for a delicious side dish.
- Skewer chunks of squash and make grilled veggie kabobs. Baste with a little heart-healthy oil to keep them juicy.
- Stack a sandwich with sliced squash and other veggies.

For added flavor and texture, grill or roast the veggies first.

## Strategies for Combating Holiday Overeating

Do the holidays put even your best healthy eating habits to the test? You're not alone. Between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, many people add from five to 10 pounds. But with a little planning, you can enjoy the foods of the season without tipping the scales. Here's how:

- **Avoid hunger.** Don't skip meals in preparation for a holiday feast. Being famished often leads to overeating.
- **Take small portions.** Denying yourself will only lead to frustration. Use a smaller plate—your servings will look bigger.
- **Choose wisely.** Go for lean meats,

such as turkey. Load up on vegetables and fruits, especially if they are prepared without added oil, butter, or sugar.

- **Avoid alcohol.** Alcohol weakens willpower and stimulates your appetite. Don't forget, it has calories, too!
- **Stick to your exercise routine.**
- **Delay dessert.** If you wait a while, your craving for sweets may pass.
- **Stand away from the food.** The closer you are, the more likely you are to nibble.
- **Take your time.** Savor every mouthful. This also allows your body time to feel satisfied by what you are eating. ●



### HEALTH TIP

**Focus on family and friends, not food. It's hard to talk and eat at the same time.**

## recipe: PUMPKIN MOUSSE



- 1 15 oz can pumpkin
- 1 8 oz container of lite whipped topping, thawed
- 1 box (4 serving size) vanilla fat-free/sugar-free pudding mix
- ¼ C skim milk
- 2 t ground cinnamon
- ¼ t ground ginger
- ¼ t ground cloves
- ¼ t ground nutmeg

In a large bowl, whip pumpkin, pudding mix, spice, and milk with an electric mixer until well blended. Fold in the whipped topping. Spoon mousse into individual serving dishes. Refrigerate for at least two hours before serving.

**For a special look:** Place mousse in a zip-top bag; cut off one corner of the bag; pipe mousse into dessert dishes.

**Yield:** 10 servings (½ C servings)

**Prep time:** 10 minutes (plus time in fridge to chill)

**Each serving provides:** Calories: 76; From fat: 27; Total fat: 3 g; Saturated fat 2.5 g; Trans fat: 0; Cholesterol: < .125 mg; Sodium: 125 mg; Dietary fiber: 1.75 g; Total carbohydrates 13 g; Sugars: 4 g; Protein: .9 g. 1 serving is equal to 1 carbohydrate choice on a diabetic diet.

**Do you have a favorite recipe to share? Call ForeSee Health at 877-436-7373 or e-mail [info@foreseehealth.com](mailto:info@foreseehealth.com).**



Deborah Zimmerman, MD  
ForeSee Health Medical Director

## Q&A: Ask Dr. Debbie

Dear Dr. Debbie,

I have tried to quit smoking so many times. Is it worth trying to quit again? I'm down to 1/2 a pack a day.

It's great that you've tried to quit before! It takes some people as many as three or four attempts before successfully quitting. Practice makes perfect.

Every time you try to quit, you learn something new that will increase your chances of being successful the next time.

Congratulations on cutting down on your smoking, but you are still at risk.

Eliminating smoking completely is still the most important thing you can do for your health.

Just because you've tried something before, doesn't mean it won't work for you the next time. Here are some strategies you can try:

- **Nicotine replacement therapy**—gum, patches, inhalers, nasal sprays, lozenges—can help ease cravings and lessen withdrawal symptoms.

- **Smoking-cessation programs and support groups** can be great

resources for learning how to change smoking habits.

- **Auricular therapy** is a safe and pain-free acupuncture treatment that can help eliminate cravings.

- **Bupropion** is a prescription antidepressant that can help you get through withdrawal symptoms by affecting certain chemicals your body links to addiction.

- **Quit lines.** Many states run free quit lines for residents. To reach the one in your area, call North America Quitline at **800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669)**.

**Do you have health questions you would like Dr. Debbie to answer?**

**Let us know! Write ForeSee Health at 14528 S. Outer Forty Road, Suite 300, Chesterfield, Missouri 63017 with your questions. You also may e-mail [info@foreseehealth.com](mailto:info@foreseehealth.com).** ●

### Plan Ahead to Prevent Holiday Stress

To beat the stress of upcoming holidays, be prepared:



1. Need to clean the house for Thanksgiving company? Don't obsess about everything being perfect.
2. Make a list of what stressed you out last holiday season. See what you can live without. If it's throwing your annual party, skip it this year.
3. Ask your family for help. Have them bake, decorate, or wrap gifts for others.
4. Don't get caught up in the pressure to buy, buy, buy. Set a spending limit that's right for your budget.
5. Avoid adding debt, which will only cause more stress.
6. Don't commit yourself to things you don't want to do. Instead, schedule a few minutes each day to care for yourself and relax.
7. Treat yourself well. Get plenty of sleep, eat right, and exercise.





# Not Feeling Rested? It May Be Sleep Apnea

**E**xtrême sleepiness during the day is the most common sign of a problem called sleep apnea. This breathing disorder actually causes people to stop breathing for 10 to 60 seconds at a time during sleep. When this happens, the amount of oxygen in the blood drops, and the brain must wake the person up so breathing can begin.

In most people, congested nasal passages or the tongue, palate, or uvula at the back of the throat may block airflow. Excess weight in the upper body can put pressure on the windpipe, also blocking airflow.

In some cases, sleep apnea occurs when the brain doesn't signal the body to breathe when it should.

## Not to Be Dismissed

Sleep apnea is serious. Untreated, it raises the risk of high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, irregular heart rhythms, heart attack, stroke, memory loss, and even death.

If you have symptoms of sleep apnea night after night, talk to your doctor. You may need to participate in a sleep study. This would involve having your brain waves, heartbeat, and breathing tracked during the night.

## Better, Healthier Sleep

If you have sleep apnea:

- avoid drinking alcohol
- maintain a healthy weight
- avoid smoking
- try not to sleep on your back. Sew a pocket onto the back of your nightshirt and put a tennis ball inside it.

Other treatments also can help. The most effective is called nasal continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP). It involves wearing a masklike device that pumps air as you inhale during sleep. This helps keep the airway open. If an underlying medical condition—such as an underactive thyroid—is causing sleep apnea, medicines can help. ●

## HEALTH TIP

The most obvious symptom of sleep apnea is severe snoring, followed by a short pause and then snorting or gasping for breath.

What topics would you like to see in *For Your Health*? We'd love to hear from you! Please e-mail [info@foreseehealth.com](mailto:info@foreseehealth.com), or write us at ForeSee Health ATTN: Newsletter Department 14528 S. Outer Forty Road, Suite 300, Chesterfield, Missouri 63017.



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