

# WEEKLY HEALTH UPDATE

Week of: Monday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Courtesy of:

**Mental Attitude: Having a Dog Helps Autistic Children Develop Stronger Social Skills.** A survey of 70 families with at least one autistic child found that autistic children who lived with at least one dog had stronger social skills than autistic children who lived in dog-free homes. Social skills are typically difficult for kids with autism to develop, but the study showed those children who owned a dog were "more likely to engage in behaviors such as introducing themselves, asking for information or responding to other people's questions." *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, October 2014*

**Health Alert: E-Cigarettes May Lead to More Respiratory Infections.** According to new laboratory findings, vapor from electronic cigarettes may increase young individuals' risk for contracting respiratory infections due to the vapor impairing the immune response in the epithelial cells that line the inside of the lungs. Lead author Dr. Qun Wu writes, "Epithelial cells are the first line of defense in our airways. They protect our bodies from anything dangerous we might inhale. Even without nicotine, this liquid can hurt your epithelial defense system and you will be more likely to get sick." Recently the American Association for Cancer Research and the American Society of Clinical Oncology issued a joint recommendation to bring e-cigarette regulations in line with those of traditional cigarettes. *PLOS ONE, January 2015*

**Diet: Binge Drinking Affects the Immune System.** Binge drinking can significantly disrupt the immune systems of young and otherwise healthy adults. In a recent study, investigators measured the immune responses of participants before they consumed any alcohol and at both two and five hours following peak intoxication. When alcohol was present in the blood samples, the researchers detected higher levels of cytokines, the proteins that signal the immune system to reduce activity. While drinkers understand how binge drinking can alter their behavior, there is less understanding of alcohol's harmful effects in other areas, such as the immune system. *Alcohol, December 2014*

**Exercise: Avoid Cold Weather Injuries.** Even when the weather gets cooler, it is important to stay physically active. However, exercising outside in cold weather can lead to possible injuries. The National Athletic Trainers' Association recommends the following to prevent injuries associated with low temperatures: dress in layers, take breaks to warm up, eat a healthy diet, stay hydrated, and avoid alcohol. *National Athletic Trainers' Association, December 2014*

**Chiropractic: Anxiety and Back Pain.** Brazilian researchers claim there is a link between anxiety and back pain among individuals under the age of forty. While this does not prove cause and effect in either direction, previous research has shown that anxiety can increase muscle tension, affect posture, and increase sedentary behavior - all factors that could increase a person's risk for back pain. *Spine, January 2015*

**Wellness/Prevention: Vitamin D Deficiency Linked to Vertebral Fragility Fractures.** Blood samples from seniors who fractured one or more vertebrae as a result of a fall showed significantly lower vitamin D levels when compared with seniors who had not experienced such an injury. This suggests that older adults who are vitamin D deficient should take measures to improve their vitamin D levels because serious injuries related to falls can significantly impact both their independence and quality of life. *The Bone & Joint Journal, January 2015*

**Quote:** "The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word 'crisis.' One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger--but recognize the opportunity." ~ *John F. Kennedy*

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