

WHAT 200 CALORIES LOOKS LIKE » CELERY

Some foods have significantly more calories than others, but what the difference actually looks like was answered by the Web site wisegeek.com. When you consider that an entire plate of broccoli contains the same number of calories as a small spoonful of peanut butter, you might think twice the next time you decide what to eat. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the average adult needs to consume about 2,000 to 2,500 calories to maintain his weight. *Printed with permission from wisegeek.com*



WALKING ON FOREIGN SOIL

When you travel overseas, take good care of your feet. You should bring comfortable, broken-in walking shoes. Don't go barefoot. Many bacteria, parasites, worms and leeches live in the soil and can invade your feet if you go barefoot, according to the University of Maryland Traveler's Clinic. Bring sandals or sneakers for walking on beaches. Jellyfish, stinging coral, poisonous rockfish, sea nettles and other painful and potentially dangerous hazards are found on or near beaches, particularly those in Asia and the South Pacific. — *HealthDay*



YOGA ON THE GO

Every Monday for 13 weeks, The Examiner and Kimberly Wilson will feature one dose of tranquility.

Meditation

Meditation is a scary word to many people. As we dive into our practice of healthy living on and off the yoga mat together, I want to begin by focusing on this misunderstood must-have for our everyday busy lives. Throughout this weekly column, I'll offer you tips and tools for infusing your world with doses of tranquility.

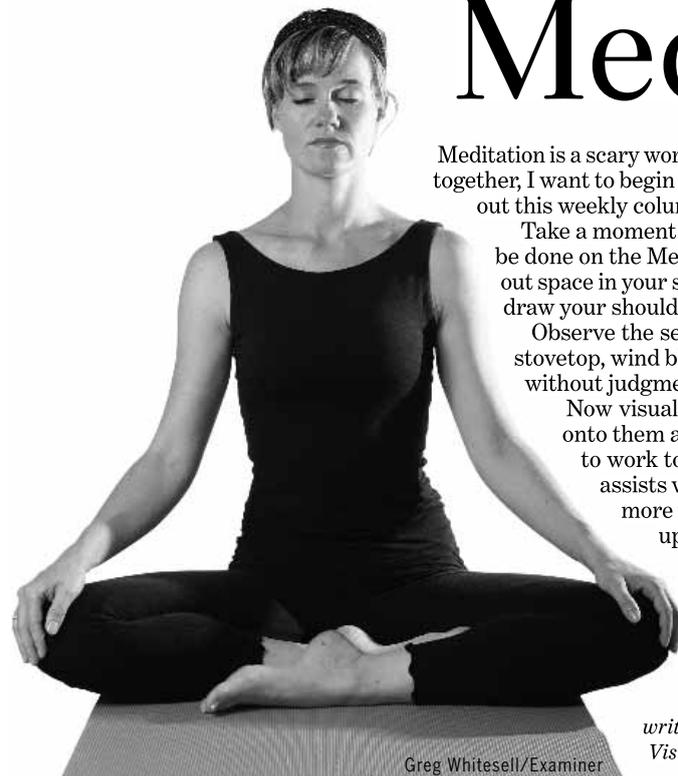
Take a moment to be in your body. Find a comfortable place to sit still and simply be. Sure, this can be done on the Metro, at the office or on your hot-pink meditation cushion — wherever you can carve out space in your schedule. Rest your hands onto your thighs, lengthen through the crown of your head, draw your shoulder blades down your back as your chest lifts, and close your eyes.

Observe the sensations around and within you — people chatting nearby, soup simmering on the stovetop, wind blowing, a clock ticking, mind replaying yesterday's drama, hips aching. Just observe without judgment.

Now visualize your thoughts passing through your mind like floating clouds — avoid holding onto them and avoid pushing them away. Let them come. Focus on each inhale and each exhale to work to tame your mind. Adding something that you repeat to yourself, such as a mantra, assists with this process. I like to use a mantra to help keep me focused, or I'm sure to create more to-dos. A favorite is to repeat "let" on the inhale and "go" on the exhale. You can make up your own by repeating something simple such as "breathe in" and "breathe out."

Try this for five minutes to start and then gradually build up to 20 minutes each day. Athletes and artists alike have found this simple technique of just being with their breath to bring tremendous creativity and endurance results. Try it, you'll like it!

Kimberly Wilson is the founder of Tranquil Space Yoga and Tranquil Space Foundation. She designs TranquiliT Luxe Lifestyle Wear, which offers comfy eco-chic clothing, and has written "Hip Tranquil Chick," which highlights how to lead a mindfully extravagant life. Visit kimberlywilson.com.



Greg Whitesell/Examiner

Fungus: No fun for feet

Over-the-counter topical preparations are ineffective at curing nail fungus, said Dr. Richard Silverstein, clinical instructor of orthopedics at the University of Maryland.

He said oral antifungal drugs are the only medication that works, but for that, patients need to see a doctor. A doctor can send a sample of the affected nail to a lab for testing.

"The only true way to know if you have a nail fungus is to take a culture plate," Silverstein said.

Fungal nails can be yellow, thickened, discolored, painful or crumbly. The skin around the nail also may become irritated, Silverstein said.

While nail fungus is most commonly seen in diabetics and the elderly, anyone can get it.

"I've seen 6-year-olds with it and 90-year-olds with it," Silverstein said.

The best way to avoid fungal nails is to wear clean, dry shoes as well as flip-flops at the beach, gym and other public places and to clean the bathtub with bleach every couple of weeks, Silverstein said.

If left untreated, fungal nails can be dangerous.

"It can spread to other toes. It can go from the nail into the skin," Silverstein said. — *Aleksandra Robinson*

CONSUMER HEALTH

Toothbrushing may strengthen gums

It may seem contradictory, but the cell damage caused by brushing your teeth may help keep your gums healthy, U.S. researchers say.

Toothbrush bristles tear holes in the epithelial cells that line the gums and tongue, causing a momentary rupture, explains a team at the Medical College of Georgia.

"It's very clear that brushing your teeth is a healthy thing to do; no one questions that brushing removes bacteria and that's probably its main function," Dr. Paul L. McNeil, a cell biologist, and study author, said in a prepared statement.

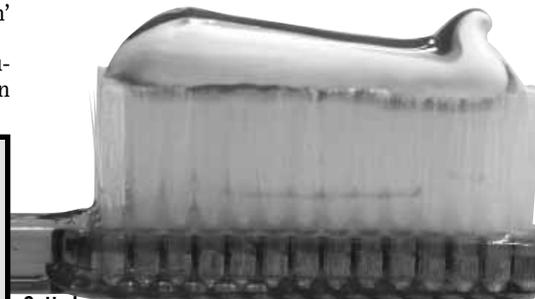
"But we are thinking that there might be another positive aspect of brushing. Many tissues in our bodies respond to mechanical stress by adapting and getting stronger, like muscles. We think the gums may adapt to this mechanical stress by getting thicker and healthier. It's the 'no pain, no gain' theory, the same as exercising," McNeil said.

For this study, he and his colleagues injected fluorescent dye into the bloodstream of rats and then

brushed the rats' teeth, gums and tongues.

Calcium (which is abundant in saliva) then moves into the cells and triggers internal membranes to move up and patch the holes, the researchers reported in the August issue of the Journal of Dental Research.

This repair takes a few seconds. During that time, growth factors that promote the growth of collagen, new blood cells and blood vessels leak out of the damaged epithelial cells. The injury to these cells also turns on expression of a gene (c-fos) that's often activated under stress and may be the first step in a response such as cell division or growth, the researchers said. — *HealthDay*



Getty Images

MORE INFORMATION

» The American Dental Association has more about cleaning your teeth and gums at ada.org/public/topics/cleaning.asp.

Study: Obese children are absent more

Obese elementary schoolchildren miss several more school days on average than their normal-weight classmates, according to a study that says being fat is a better predictor for absenteeism than any other factor.

Researchers said their results suggest that childhood obesity, in addition to serious medical issues, can lead to a plethora of additional problems down the road.

"It's clear in all the literature that the more days of school you miss, it really sets you up for such negative outcomes: drugs and AIDS and [teen] pregnancy," said Andrew B. Geier, a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania and lead author of the study. "At this early age to show that already they're missing school, and missing school is such a major setup for big-time problems, that's something school policy people have to know."

The researchers from Penn and Temple University looked at 1,069 fourth- to sixth-graders for one academic year in nine Philadelphia schools, where teachers took attendance each morning. Based on body mass index, a standard measure of height and weight, each child was classified as underweight, normal weight, overweight or obese. Of 180 school days, researchers found that on average, the normal-weight students missed 10.1 days, overweight kids missed 10.9 days and obese children missed 12.2 days. For reasons that aren't clear, underweight children had the fewest absences — 7.5 on average.

"This is exactly the kind of study that will get the attention of policy-makers," said Jim Bogden, healthy eating project coordinator for the National Association of State Boards of Education. "The correlation with absenteeism is very powerful." — *AP*



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